

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



129 790

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



















Just a dump made by wind and water into a fantastic mountain.

THE  
GREAT GOLD REEF

---

*The Romantic History of  
the Rand Goldfields*

*by*

ADÈLE LEZARD

*Publishers*

THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

INDIANAPOLIS • NEW YORK

•  
COPYRIGHT, 1937  
BY ADELE LEZARD

FIRST EDITION

Published in England and ad interim copyright  
established under the title *Gold Blast*  
Printed in the United States of America

PRINTED AND BOUND BY  
BRAUNWORTH & CO., INC.  
BUILDERS OF BOOKS  
BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

•

•

TO  
V.M.L.  
AND  
H.L.

•





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I DESIRE TO THANK THE JOHANNESBURG *STAR* AND THE *RAND DAILY Mail* for placing their many resources at my disposal, and for the full use of their collection of mining photographs. I have, too, to remember gratefully the tea and sandwiches, the private office and the many other encouragements of the *Star*.

I want to thank Mr. Godfray Lys for the many hours of reminiscences and for his enthusiasm. I wish to pay tribute, too, to Dr. C. Beyers, of the Pretoria archives, who helped me when I was in a dilemma and taught me that it is wise to be bilingual in South Africa today.

But most of all I want to thank those mining authorities, those officials and experts, who owing to some tiresome rule of their own must remain anonymous. They made this book possible, and that perhaps is why they insist on their anonymity.



•

## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| PROLOGUE  | xiii |
| I THE BEGINNING                                       | 17   |
| II THE GRAIN SPROUTS                                  | 44   |
| III OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE, AGAINST THE PEOPLE | 70   |
| IV BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE                          | 91   |
| V KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE                         | 117  |
| VI BLACK BUSINESS                                     | 141  |
| VII WHITE HEAT  | 169  |
| VIII THE SECRET PROFITS CASE                          | 191  |
| IX VISITORS' DAY AT LANGLAAGTE                        | 217  |
| X EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING                              | 227  |
| XI SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF                      | 250  |
| XII AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH                        | 271  |
| EPILOGUE  | 299  |
| INDEX   | 307  |

•



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

|  | FACING<br>PAGE      |
|--|---------------------|
| Just a dump made by wind and water into a fantastic<br>mountain . . . . .  | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| President Paul Kruger . . . . .  | 34                  |
| Johannesburg is proclaimed a public diggings. The official no-<br>tice in the government gazette in September, 1886 . . . .  | 70                  |
| The late Cecil John Rhodes . . . . .   | 86                  |
| Barney Barnato . . . . .   | 106                 |
| Johannesburg in 1886 . . . . .   | 122                 |
| A view of Johannesburg on its fiftieth birthday in 1936 . . . .  | 142                 |
| Cyanide vats at New Kleinfontein . . . . .   | 158                 |
| Drilling into the clearly defined gold reef thousands of feet below<br>the surface at Modderfontein "B" . . . . .  | 178                 |
| They have less than eighteen inches in which to work their eight-<br>hour shift in this section of Van Ryn Deep . . . . .  | 178                 |
| The speckled gold reef of the Witwatersrand may be clearly seen<br>behind the concrete supports in this large slope . . . . .                                      | 198                 |
| The slanting angle of the reef is shown in this picture taken<br>in a slope at Crown Mines . . . . .   | 198                 |
| J. B. Robinson . . . . .   | 214                 |
| Machinery which was part of the gold story yesterday lies rusting<br>in the grass today . . . . .  | 230                 |
| Rand landscape with a background of man-made mountains—<br>or dumps . . . . .  | 266                 |
| A runaway skip taken shortly after it had raced up through the<br>earth and crashed through the iron framework of the head-<br>gear, killing many people . . . . . | 282                 |
| Map . . . . .  | 302                 |



## PROLOGUE

### THE BLOOD POUNDS AGAINST YOUR TEMPLES.

The perspiration which had, at first, dripped from your forehead slowly, almost rhythmically, now begins to splash away hurriedly. It is difficult to breathe. The hot wet air beats about your throat in a menacing, surly way. Your voice, which left you timidly enough, develops into a hollow roar as it swirls round the jagged tunnel. The light from your carbide lamp throws grotesque, dancing figures onto the rock around, but it is soon drowned in the thick darkness a few feet away. Water drips from the craggy arch over your head, leaving a glistening surface of stone and slate. Underfoot the ground is slushy and slippery. The perspiration courses down your body in streams.

You feel trapped down here, and slowly your mind begins to appreciate the horror of entombment. In front of you stretches a long narrow tunnel which has been blasted out of the rock. It winds its way through the earth for some distance, and then stops. The only way to escape is to retrace your steps through the slush and mud, squeezing your way past boulders, and along sharp, razor-like walls. On and on through the dark, struggling to make your legs obey your will; on and on, while your overheated brain imagines a fall of rock just ahead, imagines the crack, the roar of falling stones, the dust flying, the darkness thicker and more solid than any darkness you have ever known.

As you drag your body along the bottom of the earth, you are acutely conscious of the distance that separates you from the life you knew only two hours ago: the buses, and the people, the shops; newspaper boys yelling, dogs playing on the square of lawn in front of the public library, morning tea at Madeleine's, and Elizabeth Bergner at the Colosseum.

You are a long way from all that now. Eight thousand five hundred feet. Eight thousand five hundred feet below the ground.



You are at the bottom of the world's deepest mine.  
At the bottom of the earth.

And yet there was a time . . .  
There was a time when . . .

•

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF



## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNING

WHEN PIET MARAIS BOARDED THE BARQUE *ATWICK* IN TABLE BAY HE was setting out to seek his fortune in a world which promised adventure to the brave and wealth to the favored. And when Captain Brewer turned his ship away from the shadow of Table Mountain into the Atlantic Ocean, Piet Marais, on the first stage of his trip to California, was excited.

He left behind him a land torn by conflicting ideals. Twelve years before, in 1836, the Great Trek had begun, and his fellow countrymen had set off across the borders of the Cape into the wildness of the unknown lands beyond. The white-tented wagons, drawn by long teams of oxen, had struggled up the high mountain ranges and on deeper into the continent, farther and farther away from the hated British rule. Beyond them lay dry burning wastes, swarming with wild animals and alive with savage native warriors. But they pushed on unfearing; strong men and women made doubly strong by the belief that they were moving toward freedom and away from the injustice of the Cape. By day they led their wagons and drove their cattle through rocky passes, over the hills and across the desolate, parched country of the Karoo. The men of the party shot game for the pot; the women cooked it; and at night, when the caravans had stopped under the cloudless velvet night, there would be prayers, and the Bible, the only book these people knew, would be reverently fingered, read and re-read, before they slept in the long grass or on the wooden floors of their wagons.

Party after party set out across the border, to open out fanwise in different directions under different leaders—Potgieter, Retief, Maritz, Uys, Triechard—and there was a young boy called Stephanus Paulus Kruger with one of the bands.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

There was plenty of adventure in the Great Trek for Piet Marais had he wanted it. There was primarily the adventure of survival. Stories trickled into Capetown, at first slowly, then with alarming frequency—stories of brutal murders, massacres, and bloody wars with the savages of the hinterland. The first party to leave the colony had been attacked by a band of natives, and all its members except two small children were murdered. The next party, moving on in an easterly direction, ran into a belt of tsetse-fly and fever, which destroyed the cattle and left only one man and a few women alive.

And in the north, Hendrik Potgieter left his party one day with eleven other men to explore the land. He traveled as far as Zoutpansberg, where he found rich soil, pastures and water, and in high spirits he turned back to report his pleasing discoveries to the rest of his party. As he neared the place where last he had left the wagons, he was greeted by a scene of indescribable horror. The warriors of the Chief Moselekatse, coming across a little party of white people in their country, had set upon them with their assegais and knives and murdered all who could not escape. Potgieter had prepared for the second native attack, which he knew would soon come. He had lashed together the fifty wagons in a circle, and filled all the open spaces with thorn trees. Inside this circle the men and women of the party collected to wait for the onslaught.

It was not long before lines of black bodies had come creeping toward the laager. As they grew nearer, the Matabele warriors leaped forward, flinging their assegais toward the circle of wagons, bellowing madly and hissing like a thousand snakes. But from the wheels and spokes of the wagons the guns of the trekkers spat out, and the army of black men fell before the fire.

They retreated, but not before they had driven off all the trekkers' cattle. In payment they left behind a hundred and fifty-five corpses.

While, in the fair land of Natal, Piet Retief had met the great Chief Dingaan. It was told in Capetown how Retief, enchanted by the fertility and beauty of this country, went to Umkung-

## THE BEGINNING

unhlovu, the Zulu capital, to make terms with Dingaan for his trekkers.

The great King of the Zulus lived in an enormous hollow circle made by row upon row of huts, with an empty space or drill-ground in the center. Living with Dingaan was an English missionary named Owen, and a young boy named William Wood, who was a firm favorite at this black Court.

Dingaan received Retief and his comrades in the most friendly and hospitable manner. They were entertained to a huge parade; they were given great squares of beef to eat and calabashes of millet beer, and when Retief broached the subject of Natal, Dingaan listened amiably. If, said the chief, the white man would, as a mark of sincerity, recover a herd of about seven hundred cattle which had been stolen from a Zulu outpost by Sikonyela, son of Ma Ntatisi, then he, Dingaan, would give Natal to the white man to live in.

Away went Retief to Sikonyela, and soon, happy and elated, he returned with the cattle to Umkungunhlovu. Once again he and his followers were received in the friendliest possible manner. Dingaan expressed himself as highly pleased with the return of his cattle, and he instructed Owen to draw up a paper setting down that he agreed to give Natal to Retief. This was done, checked and approved by Dingaan, and the paper handed over to the leader of the trekkers. Just before they left they were invited to gather in the center of the kraal, drink some beer, and bid their host good-by. Leaving their guns outside, the trekkers moved into the circle, sat on the ground and prepared to drink from the calabashes, when Dingaan's voice suddenly tore through the air.

"Seize them!" he roared, and immediately a regiment of black soldiers fell upon the unarmed men, and dragged them away to batter their skulls in with heavy clubs.

Yes, there was plenty of adventure in the Great Trek for Piet Marais. But he wanted something more than just driving wagons and fighting black men. He wanted romantic adventure, with a romantic and profitable goal. He had decided that he wanted to prospect for gold. And so one March morning in 1849 he left

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

South Africa to look for gold in California. The *Atwick* took him to Liverpool, and the *Jane Dixon* took him to San Francisco, where he landed ten months after leaving Table Bay. He headed straight for the Yuba River gold diggings, where he started prospecting. He wandered from Marysville to Oak Valley, from Oak Valley to Goodyear's Bar. He found companions, but he did not find gold.

From St. Domingo to Double Springs, from Suscol Valley to Mariposa River he went, from Aqua Frio to Bear's Valley, making a few dollars and losing them again. For two years he moved across California, and then, still looking for the jar of gold at the end of the rainbow, he left San Francisco for the goldfields of Australia. He was not much more fortunate in this country, and after a year of prospecting his thoughts turned back toward his own country. One day he wandered down to Melbourne to sell his little store of gold dust. The sailing ship *Frittercairn* from the Cape was in port, and Marais went aboard. There he met a man who had been carrying a letter for him for many weeks. It contained news of illness in his family in South Africa, and Marais decided it was time he went home. Two days later he sailed for Capetown in the good ship *Sarah Sands*.

While Piet Marais had been away, the shape and form of South Africa had altered very considerably. Those men who had been trekkers and pioneers when he left were now independent citizens of an independent state. The fighters of the covered-wagon era had now settled down in the country north of the Vaal to be good farmers and good husbands. But they had by no means given up their fighting ways. They fought with the natives, they quarreled among themselves, and they fought the British Government, with the result that at last, in 1852, the independence of the South African Republic—as this colony of trekkers was known—was acknowledged.

The new citizens of the South African Republic had settled themselves down on farms as far away as possible from one another. This attitude was prompted not so much by a distaste for one another, as by an insatiable greed for land. It was a matter for

## THE BEGINNING

great annoyance if one farmer could see the smoke of the next man's chimney, and he would most probably move farther on to rid himself of this irritating sight. The result was that each farmer had a tract of land of anything from six to twelve thousand acres to himself. Here the fighting pioneer settled down to grow mealies, tend his cattle and occasionally ride out to punish some marauding band of natives.

These simple people were quite without education; they were unable to read and write, and were totally incapable of teaching their children anything other than the Bible, which they themselves knew by heart. Courage, freedom to be held firmly and resolutely, and the art of shooting straight were the only rules of thumb for the children of the new Republic.

The country was governed by a Volksraad, or People's Parliament, the members of which were elected from among the farmers, but as there was no money at all in the Treasury, and as a bare unvarnished knowledge of how to shoot straight is not the best qualification for running a people's parliament, the South African Republic was virtually without government when Piet Marais arrived.

The representatives of the people met, from time to time, to discuss the destiny of their republic in the white-washed living room of first one farmstead and then another. Here they sat round in a circle on chairs and boxes, trying desperately to be formal and businesslike, struggling hard to remember those high-sounding phrases, those authoritative sentences such as should properly fall from the lips of a leader. A circle of great hulking men, strong in the arm, straight in the eye, and simple in the head. The women-folk, in rusty black dresses and large sunbonnets, moved happily in and out of these Council meetings, handing round strong black coffee and mealie cakes, laughing boisterously among themselves, and throwing their conversation right across the room into the circle of statesmen. It was all delightfully informal—but not on purpose.

One tenet, and one tenet only, did these big bearded farmers understand, and that was the doctrine of freedom. They had



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

suffered the hundred hardships of the Great Trek, they had fought and died for this principle, and they did not mean ever to forfeit their hard-won liberty.

Just at this moment, in 1852, their only embarrassment was too much freedom and too little money. The citizens of the South African Republic were so free, indeed, that they never thought, for one moment, of paying their taxes to the State. The Treasury, as a result, was so empty that the Government could not raise the funds to pay an outstanding debt of five pounds, and it was forced to give the creditor a six-thousand-acre farm in settlement of the account, much to his annoyance.

The representatives of the people tried everything to get money from their burghers. They coaxed, wheedled, bullied, and finally, almost with a sob in their official voice, they begged.

"The Volksraad in all reasonableness asks the public for support, and that every one of the public shall bear in mind to contribute something toward the maintenance of our State," they cried.

But this appeal, piteous as it was, fell upon deaf ears, and the people of the South African Republic went their ways unheeding. The country was supposed to derive its income from a tax of four shillings and sixpence a year on every burgher over twenty years of age. This is probably how the metaphor of wringing blood out of a stone was born. At any rate, the Volksraad went on meeting, and went on deciding now to demand, now to ask nicely for money. And the people of the State went on determining not to take any notice. And in the meantime the trade of the country was conducted by barter.

Constant disturbances with the natives occurred, and the People's Parliament, driven frantic with economics, decided to appeal to the conscience of their fellow men. Thus, when a military expedition was sent to quash a native rising, the burghers were informed that the costs would be met by public subscription, to be collected after the expedition. The battle was fought and won, and the victorious Commandant-General confidently appealed for gifts to defray the expense of two cannon. This eloquent appeal and the bravery and heroism of the burghers in the field gripped

## THE BEGINNING

the heart and the imagination of about six thousand people, and forty-nine patriots responded to make a grand total subscription of eleven pounds five shillings.

Now, Piet Marais had bought a horse in Capetown and had set off on a trip into the interior. He rode all through the beauty and greenery of the Cape, past the vineyards, up through the rocky gorges of the mountains, along land splashed with wild-growing arum lilies, stiff upright proteas and flaming daisies, on into the flat bare land beyond the Vaal, where the sight of water was a rare thing, where there were no trees, but only stunted bushes, and the rocks were hot to the touch.

He stopped at many a farmhouse on the way to give greetings to the farmer and his wife, to drink coffee, and to rest a while. And sitting on the broad veranda, he told his listeners glowing stories of his adventures in Canada and Australia. He told them how he had searched for gold in the rocks and rivers, and how sometimes he had found it. He described to these rapt audiences what gold looked like, how much it weighed, what the feel of it was. And then on again he would go, waving good-by to a now admiring and envious host.

He was heading for Potchefstroom, a little settlement of huts and houses that was the main town of the Republic. It was hard riding over the dry red ground, with the sun beating down relentlessly, and the dust flying round his horse's hoofs. And so, when he came to the Yokskei River, the sight of water was enough to prompt him to dismount. He drank from the river, washed his dirt-stained face and neck, and sat for a while on the bank, flicking stones into the water and watching the ripples grow.

He picked up a piece of rock bigger than the rest, half raised his arm to throw, and then stopped. This rock was unusual. Its formation reminded him vaguely of something he had seen in California, or perhaps in Australia. He wondered. His interest awoke, and going across to his saddle-bag he dug out a shallow iron pan. Then he looked about for a hard stone to act as a pestle, and soon he was pounding away, crushing the rock into small pieces, and then smaller fragments, in the little iron tray. When

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

he had finished he washed the crushings expertly, once, twice, three times, slowly tilting the water round the pan. And gradually along the rim a line of yellow began to appear.

It was gold.

Unmistakably it was gold.

In Potchefstroom the news quickly spread that Piet Marais, who had prospected both in Canada and Australia, had found gold in the Yokskei River, near the Ridge of the White Waters or, as they called it, the Witte Waters Rand. He was besieged with inquiries, offers, suggestions and advice, and, in order to prove his discovery, he promised to give a public exhibition of his find.

The court-house at Potchefstroom was engaged, and there to a packed audience of farmers Piet Marais explained how to look for gold and how to find it. He also showed them what he himself had found in their Republic, at the Yokskei River, near the Witte Waters Rand.

The Council of the People's Parliament sat in solemn conclave. The first item on the agenda to be discussed was the discovery of gold in their country by Piet Marais. The second item was another emergency measure to collect funds for the State Treasury.

The womenfolk chattered ceaselessly. The men in their big-brimmed hats looked important and interesting. This discovery of gold, the Chairman pointed out, was not so simple as it looked. It would be a good thing if gold were found to exist in the Republic in large quantities. It would mean money and wealth and prosperity for the farmers. But they all knew, just as he knew, that where there was gold, there were foreigners. People from all over the world would rush to the South African Republic when they heard of the discovery. They would come in their thousands. Heathens, atheists, disbelievers, followers of Satan, and Englishmen would pour over their borders to search for their gold and bleed the Republic dry. Were they prepared, the Chairman thundered, were they prepared to be swamped by the foreigners? Were they willing to forfeit the freedom which they and their fathers had fought so valiantly to gain? Were they ready to

## THE BEGINNING

sacrifice their beliefs—nay, to sacrifice their homesteads, their wives and children—to the cunning greed of the foreigner? Were they prepared to submit once more to the injustice of the English? The Council, he suggested, knew that he spoke the truth. They knew that their liberty was at an end once the world learned of the discovery of gold. Were they willing, then, to throw away meekly this land which they had won by blood and sweat? Were they willing to sacrifice every ideal their fathers ever held?—Were they?

And the Council bellowed, "No."

After the Volksraad had worked itself up into a state of patriotic frenzy, and cooled down again, somebody suggested it would be rather a clever thing for them to have their cake and eat it too. Why could not the People's Parliament send for this man Marais, and bind him on sacred oath to work secretly on their behalf? If, it was pointed out, if Marais was bound by oath to the Volksraad, then the country could have gold as well as security.

The big-bearded farmers, still a little flushed from their enthusiasms, tasted this new idea. They rolled it round their mouths. They liked it. They pronounced it good. And so the Secretary, who had once lived in Holland, and could still read and write, was instructed to draw up an agreement between the Volksraad and Mr. P. J. Marais along the lines indicated at the meeting, and to send for Mr. Marais to sign it.

The heart-rending appeal of the Commandant-General for funds was optimistically postponed.

Piet Marais, not being a citizen of the South African Republic, was unaware of the immense freedom of the burghers. That is to say, he was not aware that it was customary to treat the Volksraad with a light-hearted flippancy and firm disobedience. And so, when he was brought before the Council and presented with a paper for signature, he erroneously thought that he had no option but to conform.

He was businesslike enough, at least, to read it through carefully first, and he found that the terms offered him were not so bad, after all.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

The agreement was set out in the Secretary's very best and most official Hollands, as follows:

### "AGREEMENT

"entered into between the Honourable Volksraad of the South African Republic, on the one hand, and Mr. P. J. Marais, on the other hand, with the object of investigating and discovering gold mines probably in existence in this Republic.

"(1) I, the undersigned P. J. Marais, hereby promise to keep secret all discoveries of gold mines discovered by me on the order and authority of the Honourable Volksraad of the South African Republic, and to bring them to the acquaintance of nobody excepting to my principals or to such as may be empowered by them and made known to me for that purpose.

"(2) I also promise to exert my utmost endeavours to discover the existence of gold mines or gold dust in rivers or spruits, and to report on them and disclose them by means of a written account submitted to each specified session of the Honourable Volksraad, and at the same time also to indicate in which locality in my opinion there should probably exist the most gold or dust.

"(3) I furthermore take upon myself, in the event of other metals being discovered by me, of whatsoever nature they may be, to act likewise as undertaken by me concerning gold dust in sections 1 and 2 above.

"(4) I also undertake to hand over to my principals all metals found by me, to do therewith as they might think fit, and to retain to myself nothing of what I may find.

"(5) The Honourable Volksraad of the South African Republic hereby guarantees to the said Mr. P. J. Marais the full right to proceed with the discovery of gold mines and of all other useful and precious metals or precious stones, if these might exist and could be found within this Republic.

"(6) When the said Mr. P. J. Marais succeeds in discovering gold, in one or more places, and the excavation thereof envisages profit for this country, the Honourable Volksraad guarantees to pay a sum of money, or the value thereof in

## THE BEGINNING

gold ore taken from one or more of the discovered mines, amounting to Rix-dollars 66,666-5-2, equal to £5000 sterling.

“(7) If, however, the said Mr. P. J. Marais does not succeed in disclosing a sufficient supply of gold whereby the cost of excavation and the afore-mentioned reward could be met, the said Mr. Marais shall have no claim whatsoever to the reward stipulated in Section 6.

“(8) The Honourable Volksraad undertakes to appoint a commission in all the existing districts, such as Lydenburg, Potchefstroom, Rustenburg and Zoutpansburg, and to make such commission known to Mr. P. J. Marais in writing, and the aforesaid Mr. Marais shall be bound, in the event of his discovering gold, to address himself to the commissioners of that district under which is situated the place where he shall have found the gold, and he shall not have the right to make any further diggings in such a place where he shall have discovered gold, excepting in the presence of the said district commissioners, under whose supervision all further investigations shall have to be carried out in accordance with orders received.

“(9) And when it may appear that the said Mr. Marais conducts himself meritoriously, and that he as a man of honour faithfully fulfils and carries out his promises and the orders given him by the Honourable Volksraad, the Government reserves to itself the right to assign to him a reward in proportion to his merits and the faithfulness shown by him, over and above the sum stipulated in Section 6 above; or, should at any time a mine discovered by him be worked or opened, to entrust him with the direction thereof.

“(10) And the Honourable Volksraad reserves to itself the right to give to the said Mr. Marais from time to time such orders as time and circumstances might require, and on receiving the same in writing he shall be bound to obey and carry them out.

“(11) And if the said Mr. Marais should wish to take one or more persons with him on his journey, he shall be bound to exercise care that they be persons of good conduct, and he shall be bound to let them sign a declaration that they would never, without permission or order obtained from the Honour-

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

able Volksraad, divulge anything seen by them in matters pertaining to gold dust found, nor make endeavours, without permission of the Honourable Volksraad, to accomplish any excavation of precious metals found, and the said Mr. Marais shall be bound to submit to the Honourable Volksraad agreements thus entered into and signed, to enable the latter to take legal steps against and punish such persons as might violate the vow signed by them.

“(12) But when it should happen that the said Mr. P. J. Marais gives to any foreign power, government or particular individuals any information concerning the condition of the gold mines found, or anything pertaining thereto, by means of which the peace and freedom of this Republic should be disturbed or threatened, he would be punished by death without any excuse.

“(13) All transgressions of a different nature, bearing on this matter, shall be dealt with in accordance with the existing laws of the country.

“This done in our meeting at Potchefstroom on the 6th December, 1853, and two exact copies hereof have been made, for each of the parties one copy to serve as a proper reminder for both parties.

“Signed on behalf of the Honourable Volksraad of the South African Republic north of the Vaal River.

(Signed) “C. POTGIETER,  
“Chairman.

“By order  
(Signed) “H. T. BUHRMAN,  
“Secretary.

“Agreed to by me under the oath taken before the Honourable Volksraad and this day voluntarily agreed to and signed by me.

(Signed) “P. J. MARAIS.”

Piet Marais thought the twelfth clause a little exacting, but nevertheless he obediently signed. The Volksraad were highly delighted at having a hand in this impressive-sounding document, and they congratulated Buhrman, the Secretary, several times be-

## THE BEGINNING

cause the Treasury could not afford to increase his salary, and this was the most they could do for the able fellow. Then they sat back waiting for the money to roll in; every now and then they whispered words of encouragement to the Commandant-General and to one another.

Marais took his horse and started off across the flat country of the Republic in search of gold. It was the peak of summer time. The short grass and stunted bushes were brown with dust, and the heat rose from the ground in a dancing haze. The shade offered by an occasional mimosa tree was no more than an illusory coolness, for the hard red ground was burning, and the still air was stifling. One empty mile after another stretched away to the horizon. Every now and again the lifelessness of the landscape was broken by a swarming herd of wild animals. Wildebeeste stamped and snorted across the sun-baked ground with heads lowered and eyeballs fiercely dilated. A dozen different sorts of buck picked their way in delicate leaps among the boulders and the bushes, and occasionally giraffe moved exaggeratedly across the ground, their legs following at a respectful distance behind the long, unbelievable neck. A rhinoceros would come roaring down the plains, his single murderous tusk hungry for flesh to tear, his hoofs thundering out clouds of dust. And on the ground the deadly black mamba, the cobra, the adder, the ringhals would slip silently away into the undergrowth.

Piet Marais felt for the gun in his saddle, and whipped it out when he heard the throaty, snarling roar of lion just behind him. Two shots, and a heavily maned lion with his lean hungry lioness fell writhing to the ground.

Marais rode on, through the heat and the dryness of the African country. At Dwars River he found specks of gold, but in minute quantities. In Bloed River he found traces again, but though he went back to the Yokskei River, and scoured the Ridge of the White Waters until the sun sank and the ground was hidden in darkness, he could not find any gold worth mentioning to the Volksraad. Just specks of it here and there to lead him on, always on, but never anything more.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

From January to March he went on searching, from April to September. Then he heard the news of the Makapaanspoort murder, and he rode off on commando. Piet Potgieter, the elephant-hunter, had somehow offended the Chief Makapaan. He was caught by a band of native warriors and was flayed alive; his skin was made into a cloak for the black King. The passions of the Boers were fanned to flames by the horror of this murder, and they planned revenge. Marais joined the punitive army which was led by young Paul Kruger, a very able soldier, and they rode off to attack the natives in the hills.

The Makapaan tribe fled before their guns into a cave a thousand feet long. This was the Boers' chance. They blocked the entrance to the cave with stones and thornbush and left the imprisoned tribe to die of starvation and thirst. Well revenged for Potgieter's death, the commando rode back to their farmsteads, while Marais went on over the flat country looking for gold.

From October to December, and into the New Year—

In the meantime the Volksraad at Potchefstroom had grown impatient. They sent a stern message to Marais demanding to know what he was doing, and instructing him to report fully to them.

"HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN" (Marais wrote)

"I am sorry to say I have nothing interesting to report. I visited different places on the other side of Zoutpansberg along the Crocodile River, as well as the cave on the east side of Zoutpansberg, and Blaauwberg on the west side of the same town—but without finding anything interesting. As a result of expecting a commando last winter to attack the native chief Mapela, and afterwards the actual breaking out of war in October, November and December last, it was made impossible for me to inspect those regions near Mapela, Matata, Moraba and Zebedela.

"In company with Mr. William Way I visited Yokeskey River in January last, and stayed there a week, but with the same result. I also visited Derdepoort and the new town Pretorium, but without finding anything. In February and

## THE BEGINNING

March I visited Marico and Malmaine, but found nothing worth while.

"The copper mines along the Magaliesberg and in Marico seemed to me to be no richer than five to twenty-five per cent., and no copper mine under fifty per cent. will pay here. The copper mines of Namaqualand are from forty to seventy per cent. and are only nine 'treks' from Honee Klipberg; but here in this country labour will be much cheaper.

"In the beginning of next June I hope to go on a cross-country tour in company with Mr. Jan Viljoen, Field-Cornet of Marico, to a stretch of land north-west of the Crocodile River between the native Chiefs Pegomoa and Matsелеkaats; and it may happen that we will go from there farther north in the direction of the land belonging to the native chief Maatsелеkaats and Missehier farther on. I hope to be in a position to give you a better report than this one when I come back."

The People's Parliament was very angry indeed. It was sixteen months now since Marais had signed that agreement, and they had been waiting like fools and idiots for gold to be discovered in their country.

They met in session and sat round in an annoyed circle, muttering their grouses and spitting their disgust. The position was preposterous. This man Marais was a rogue and a scoundrel. What had he been doing all these sixteen months? Yes, they would like to know, what had he been doing? It was obvious to them, as leaders of the people, that there was no gold in their Republic. They had been fooled by Marais. They had been tricked by him. They instructed the cultured Mr. Buhrman to write immediately to Marais ordering him to report in person to the next meeting of the Volksraad, and forbidding him to proceed with his investigations until that time.

But Marais never turned up at that September session of the Volksraad. Tired and dispirited, he, too, had come to doubt the existence of gold. He had searched hard enough for it without success. He had covered practically every inch of the Republic

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

without finding it, so he concluded it could not exist. And as by this time he had also come to doubt the good nature and amiability of the People's Parliament, he slipped across the borders of the Republic, across the Vaal River, away from the phantom which he had thought gold, away into the land beyond, never to return.

The Volksraad, sitting in Potchefstroom, ordered the officials of the State to collect all outstanding taxes and to be very frugal with public expenditure.

Thirteen years passed. The Boer farmers went about their lives simply and peacefully. Their wives begat them children, and they plowed the land and sowed mealies and corn, cabbages and potatoes. The first excitement occasioned by the theory of gold in their State rapidly died, and was soon a dusty story of the past.

Hunters and explorers crossed their borders, rested a while in the neat little settlement town of Pretoria, and then went their ways, some to seek ivory, others to seek adventure.

It never struck any one member of the Republic to continue the search where Marais had left off. First, they did not believe gold existed in their country. Secondly, they were confident that any discovery of gold was a matter for the will of God, and if He willed it to be found in their land, well, then, there was nothing they could do about it.

And so the land across the Vaal slumbered peacefully until Carl Mauch arrived, and even then it dozed a little.

Carl Mauch was a young German who had come to explore the unknown continent of Africa. He was a fearless, likable person with a vivid imagination which was never limited to the tedious boundaries of fact. He and his friend Thomas Baines, the writer and explorer, were welcome guests at Pretoria, where they would sit over campfires at night listening to the Boers tell hair-raising stories about lions and cannibal chiefs, and capping each story with a still more sensational but far less accurate description of adventure. Mauch, like the yet unknown Rhodes, turned his eyes to the north, and was drawn to the land beyond the Limpopo River which Livingstone was then visiting.

## THE BEGINNING

He, like everyone else who had visited the Republic, had heard tales of gold, but, unlike most people, he believed there might be a thread of possibility somewhere in this flimsy fabric of gossip. And so, when he left Pretoria on a trip into the interior to hunt elephants, he did not confine his thoughts solely to tusks.

At a place called Tati in Bechuanaland, Mauch struck gold. A few months later he made another strike of auriferous quartz in the South African Republic, on the north side of the Oliphants River. The finds were rich, but limited. The quartz carried a high percentage of gold, but the formation did not persist, for the ore occurred in little pockets or shoots, which very soon petered out into barren rock.

But Mauch's imagination had been fired, and with all the zest and color he could command he sent glowing, jubilant reports of his discoveries across Africa to percolate the minds and the hearts of the people. The more he thought about it, the more certain he was that he had stumbled on a hidden Eldorado. He said as much, and more, and his imagination leaped over gaps in the chain and vaulted across disappointing evidence which at first puzzled him, and then bored him.

He sent excited reports of his discoveries home to Germany, announcing to the world that he had found gold, rich gold in great quantities, which would provide work for thousands of people and open up the greatest goldfields in the world.

Mauch had exaggerated on one point only. The gold was indeed rich and plentiful; there was enough to employ thousands of people and to prove the existence of the greatest goldfields in the world. Only it hadn't been found by Mauch or anybody else yet.

The great golden reef of the Witwatersrand was still lying tucked snugly under the ground not very far away.

However, that was Mauch's story, and he stuck to it, and many hundreds of people came swarming to Africa, from Germany, England, Australia and California, only to find that the gold of the South African Republic was unprofitable, and that it occurred in such small quantities as to make it barely worth while.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Most of the traveling prospectors went home disappointed. But one thing, at least, Mauch did for South Africa, and that was to make it gold-conscious, and from then onward people went about their jobs with their eyes glued to the ground hopefully. For the next two or three years there were sporadic bursts of gold-finding all over the country, but, as Marais would have said, there was nothing interesting to report. Mauch, by this time, was held in popular esteem as a scientist of the highest order, and he was bombarded with requests for his advice and opinion. Somebody—old Robert Lys it was—brought him a piece of rock from the Ridge of the White Waters and asked him to examine it.

"Yes, yes," said Mauch absent-mindedly, "I'll look into it."

But he didn't, for he went back to his home in Germany on holiday soon afterward and was accidentally killed.

In the meantime, the affairs of State of the South African Republic were no healthier than before. It is true that paper money had been issued, but this was looked upon with the greatest contempt by the Boer farmers, and the money was passed from hand to hand at a discount of about seventy-five per cent. Dealers and traders refused to sell goods against payment in notes, and the farmers, who had no money at all, went about practically in rags. At this time Thomas Burgers was appointed President of the Republic.

Burgers was an educated and able man with ideas more advanced than those of his sixteenth-century electorate. The Treasury was in such a hopeless muddle when he took over the reins that he realized that the country must either get money at once or go under. He immediately offered a reward of five hundred pounds for the first discovery of gold which would prove payable to the State, and was adroit enough to avoid paying over the reward when perfectly justifiable demands were made for it.

The discoveries of gold in South Africa continued. Sometimes they were small and unimportant. Sometimes they were rich pockets of gold which attracted excited rushes of diggers and then petered away miserably. And the diggers and prospectors tramping across the Republic looking for gold trudged over and across a



President Paul Krueger.



## THE BEGINNING

long band of curiously speckled rock on the Ridge of the White Waters.

About this time a child was playing on a farm in the north of Cape Colony with a glittering pebble she had found in the river. A trader noticed it, and the first diamond of South Africa was discovered. This, on the face of it, seems to have nothing whatever to do with gold.

On the outskirts of the little tin-roofed town of Pretoria there lived two or three families of English people. There were the Strubens, for example, who lived on the farm called the "Willows," and near by there was old Captain Lys, and his son Godfray. They were on the best of terms with the British-hating Boers, for they had lived in this part of the country almost as long as the trekkers themselves. The Strubens' father, before he died, had even been a member of the Volksraad and State-Attorney of the Transvaal, while Captain Lys, after he had left the Navy and had his fill of hunting elephants, had settled down to live in Pretoria.

At the Willows, Harry was lord of the house, and a married man. He was a great many years older than his young brother, and a great deal more severe and exacting. This was a little awkward, because Harry controlled the purse strings.

Young Fred and his pal Godfray Lys spent their boyhood together roaming the bare rocky wastes of country encircling Pretoria. There was no school for them to attend, no university, so they spent the long sunlit days trudging across the veldt, watching the birds circling overhead, investigating the habits and habitats of the wild animals and the flowers, and examining the rocks and stones at their feet. Fred was especially interested in the geology of the country, and with the aid of the old-timers' experiences which he drank in at night in the little town of Pretoria, and with the results of his own observations, this straight-limbed, blue-eyed young man came to know a very great deal about the formation of his country, and soon he could tell the old-time trekkers things they themselves did not know about the rocks of the Republic.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

It was Fred's particular hobby to believe that the country across the Vaal was rich in gold, and that somewhere in this bleak barren land there lay vast fields of gold. So absorbed was he in this theory, so firmly did he cling to his contentions, that his brother Harry, and everyone else, came to regard him as a fanatic, as a rather queer young man. But Godfray Lys believed in him, and these two young explorers would spend hours of their time discussing the great subjects of geology and gold.

Now, Fred could not prove any one of his theories because he had no money, and no one, apart from the faithful Godfray, believed in him. So he decided that he must go into business until he had accumulated enough capital to start prospecting. One bright November day, then, he packed up a couple of shirts and a pair of khaki trousers, said good-by to the Willows, and set off by cart for Natal to open up a brick-and-pottery factory outside Durban. Godfray, pressed just as hard by the necessity of earning a living, joined the Army.

In Natal, Fred managed to earn a few pounds, but it was a slow process. The country, at this time, was ringing with the reports of the wonderful gold discoveries at Barberton, and, thinking that this was the chance to increase his modest earnings quickly, Fred left the brick factory and set off for Moodie's Camp. He had no great faith in the gold deposits of Barberton, and although they were yielding rich returns to the diggers, he was suspicious about the continuity and persistence of the auriferous rock. Still, if he could make money at Barberton, he could then exploit his own gold theories, which centered round the Witte Waters Rand and the country beyond.

At Barberton, Fred added a few more pounds to his capital, but the addition was not sensational enough, so he moved on to the Waterberg Camp. Here at Waterberg they told him there were rich deposits, and he started out to look for them. But he found nothing, and lost every penny he had laboriously saved.

Disappointed and unhappy, he went back to the Willows to talk to his brother Harry. Fred was eloquent, and Harry was shrewd. Fred was convincing, and Harry knew that diamonds

## THE BEGINNING

and gold were being discovered all over the country. When, therefore, he was confronted by the earnest, unwavering enthusiasm of his young brother Fred, Harry realized that there might be just a chance of making money, there might be just a possibility of striking gold. So he agreed to finance Fred—within reason.

The two men were talking together on the broad wide veranda of the farmstead, when Dirk Geldenhuis rode up. Geldenhuis was a simple, straightforward, honest Dutchman, owner of the farm Wilgespruit, some thirty-five miles away, and a friend of the Strubens. He had always shown a conservative sort of interest in the discoveries of gold, and regarded young Struben with more than the prevailing respect. He had even been to Barberton to see for himself what was going on. Today he rode up to the Willows, dismounted and in customary Boer fashion, proceeded to talk about every subject under the sun save the one which he had purposely come to discuss. The Strubens listened and waited patiently. At last, having exhausted his dialectic powers, Geldenhuis drew a piece of rock out of his coat pocket and handed it to Fred, observing that the quartz on his farm seemed to be very like that which he had seen at Barberton. Fred looked at the piece of stone in his hand carefully.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"On my farm at Wilgespruit," Geldenhuis said.

"How far away is it?"

"About thirty-five miles."

"Can we go there?"

"Yes, certainly. When?"

"Now."

And without waiting for any further explanations, Fred called for his horse, jumped into the saddle, and rode off toward Wilgespruit, with a very surprised Geldenhuis following behind.

When he returned to the Willows about a week later, Fred told his brother that from a brief examination he considered the Rand the finest formation he had seen in South Africa. Even Harry was a little excited.

The next day Fred Struben set out to prospect the Rand. He

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

went alone to the bleak barren waste of land, carrying with him a few provisions, a shallow tin pan, and a rough type of pestle and mortar. Thus equipped, he started scraping away at the rocks on the ridge, examining them, crushing them in his "dolly," and tramping over the veldt to a solitary stream to wash for gold. Here, alone, without sight of human creature, he worked the weeks away. Sometimes the sun beat down viciously on this lone figure in the heart of the wild country, and the heat, pouring down mercilessly from an empty sky, closed about the searcher until his neck and arms and back were flaming and his eyes were blinded with the glare. Sometimes the wind came whistling over the high ridge in a piercing frenzy, searching out and killing the very heart and spirit of the man.

But Fred Struben worked on. The days became weeks, the weeks slid into months. January, February, March, April—and still he had not found the rich fields of which he had dreamed so long. The confidence and certainty grew dimmer as he searched the very ground that Piet Marais had searched. Nothing but empty, fruitless rock. Crushing it, washing it. Nothing. Had he been wrong all the time? Was this ridge no more than a futile stretch of bleak ground, put there to tear the hope out of his body and the faith out of his heart? His convictions drooped like the few brave wild flowers on that rocky ridge drooped in the midday sun.

May, June, July, August—he found some curiously speckled rock high up on the ridge, and he crushed it. But there was nothing. No gold. He tramped slowly away.

One morning in September the sun drew a glitter and a sparkle from a belt of rock lying a few paces away from Struben. He walked across, and the rock winked and glowed at him. Iron pyrites sparkled like that. Apathetically he crushed it. A rim of yellow appeared round the edge of the shallow iron tin. He poured some acid into it and boiled it.

It was gold.

Rich thick gold at last. He had found a reef of it four feet thick. He called it the "Confidence Reef."

Fred sent word to his brother to come at once, and together the

## THE BEGINNING

two of them opened up Confidence Reef. Its first richness was astounding. A small piece of quartz yielded nearly a teaspoonful of gold, and it was this richness that made them keep their discovery secret until they had obtained all the options they needed. Fred could not keep it secret from his friend Godfray, though.

"At last," he wrote, "I've found it at last. There will be room in this country for millions of capital and thousands of workers."

Curious, that repetition of a prophecy made long before by Mauch. Curious, because neither of them had yet found the reef. But Struben was nearer the mark. He, at least, was working almost on top of it, even though he was unconscious of this. He, at least, had actually handled some of the pebbly spotted rock, even though he had thrown it away.

There are no secrets in South Africa. There are too few people in the country, and they talk too much. It was the same then as it is now. The news of the Struben strike found its way into the village of Pretoria, where the recently appointed "State President" was "in residence"—that is, had a tin-roofed cottage. The name of the new President was Stephanus Paulus Kruger, and he was a clever man. He had all the grim prejudice of the early trekkers with whom he had marched on that long road away from the British, but he had sense, too. So he sent one of his officials to the Strubens with instructions to explain the financial conditions of the Transvaal, and with a request that the goldfields, if they *were* goldfields, should be declared as soon as possible.

Accordingly, in a tennis ground at the back of the local club, Harry Struben demonstrated the Struben discoveries before the President and members of the Transvaal Volksraad.

Toward the end of that year, Godfray Lys came up to the Rand to join his friend Fred, and the two of them crushed away under a cloudless sky at Confidence Reef. It was a confidence misplaced, though, for the rich values of the surface dwindled away gradually, and the reef, so close to that unsuspected sheet of rock, began to pinch out.

Kleinboy, the little native whom they took with them into the veldt, went on cooking roosterkoecks out of flour, salt and a little

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

baking-powder over a pile of sticks. He was unperturbed, even when the half-a-crown he was paid as wages every Friday was hastily borrowed back from him on Monday morning.

Fred Struben looked around him, and at night, when it was too dark to work, the friends would sit together inside their flimsy tent high up on the Ridge of the White Waters, discussing their next move.

Two hoboes were tramping along the dry sun-baked country of the Transvaal. The ground stretched round them fruitlessly, unbroken by any hint of civilization. Mounds of earth piled up by wind and storm through the centuries formed hills and kopjes, topped by loose boulders and pebbly rocks. Sparse stunted bushes clung desperately close to the ground, trying to get as far away from the sun as possible. The wild grass was brown and brittle with the dryness; the wind was hot.

The two men scanned the horizon anxiously. There was no sign of life. They trudged on silently under the baking blue sky. It was three days since they had met with anyone. That was when they had come to Maritz's farm and were given food and a night's shelter. But nobody, nothing since then. Not even the ox-wagon they were praying for. The country was empty save for these two tired tramps.

One of them, George Walker, was a handyman and builder. The other, George Harrison, was a carpenter. They had hit the northern trail from the Cape heading toward Barberton, where, it was said, there were gold and work for everyone.

Nine hundred miles they had come, across that bare unresponsive country. Sometimes they had managed to get a lift in a passing ox-wagon. That was what they were hoping for now. Sometimes they were given odd jobs to do at the farmsteads they passed on the way. Then they would stay two or three days before shouldering their packs and setting out again into the roadless, untracked country. Nine hundred miles of lifeless land, over high hills, across flat burning plains, always moving toward an empty horizon.

## THE BEGINNING

The ox-wagon did not come. They climbed laboriously up a ridge, and when they reached the crest they saw something which made them quicken their tired steps. They saw a little white tent, and then two men.

Fred Struben and Godfray Lys were crushing rock in their new five-stamp battery which Harry had just imported from England. They were wondering, as they worked together, if they could last out until Fred had found the rich strike about which he talked so much and so confidently.

The hoboes came up and saluted the two young prospectors. They asked a little anxiously if there was any work for them to do here. Godfray had already answered "No" when Fred called the two artisans back.

They could build him a house here. He was tired of living in a tent. It must be a small house, and not expensive. It was a surprising thing for this young man to do. Confidence Reef was thinning out, and he had not yet struck a new deposit, but he was ordering a shack to be built for him here on a lonely ridge miles away from anybody. It was a sort of gesture of faith in his own predictions, a sort of symbol to the outer world that Struben stood firm and unshaken on the Witte Waters Rand.

The four men worked side by side each at his own job. But the two builders were more interested in the crushing for gold than the prospectors were in house-building.

The shack was completed, and there was nothing more for Walker and Harrison to do. Fred suggested that they should go across to the adjoining farm, where the Widow Oosthuizen needed some builders. The name of the farm, he said, was Langlaagte.

Now, the Widow Oosthuizen was a large spreading woman with a pale face and a good nature. Her husband had come to the land across the Vaal with the Great Trek; he had moved out to the Witte Waters Rand with his few head of cattle, and after walking round the country until he was tired enough to proclaim a boundary, he had settled down in the middle as the owner of the farm Langlaagte. When he died, the widow became the owner

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

of this large stretch of stubbly country with its few head of mangy cattle and a farmstead. Most of the year round she lived by herself, growing her mealies and grinding her own rough flour, but just now she had her nephew, George Honeyball, staying with her.

The Widow Oosthuizen was not quite sure whether she wanted a cottage built or not. She had been playing happily with the idea for months, but had never been able to force herself to a decision. When, however, the two tramps appeared and asked for work, and particularly when they told her they were very hungry, the good-hearted creature agreed at once to let them start building.

Her nephew, George, who for some extraordinary reason had set himself up in the heart of this country wilderness as a blacksmith, temporarily forsook his non-existent business to help with the carpentry of the new house. Despite this, the job was soon finished, and once again the brother hoboës were obliged to move on. They decided on Sunday afternoon to move off toward Barberton early on Monday morning. While Honeyball and Harrison were criticizing each other's building achievements, and while the Widow Oosthuizen busied herself in the kitchen, George Walker went for a short stroll. He wandered away from the farmstead across the flat open ground toward a slight hump in the ground. The grass beneath his feet was thick and knotted. He walked disconsolately. He did not look forward to the long trail before him. He had had enough of trekking. He had been comfortable and happy at Langlaagte, and the Widow Oosthuizen had fed him well. But there was no reasonable excuse for staying here, now that the cottage was finished. And, in any case, there might be some soft jobs going at Barberton——

He stopped thinking like this quite suddenly, because his head was nearly jerked off his shoulders as he tripped over the thick matted grass. He was as irritated by this as an old gentleman who has been sent sprawling by a piece of string and a schoolboy. Unlike an old gentleman, George Walker turned to kick. At his feet lay a piece of rock almost hidden by the long grass. It glittered in the sun. He stooped to pick it up.

## THE BEGINNING

It was at this precise moment in the year of 1886, that the great gold-bearing reef of the Witwatersrand was discovered.

George Walker, handyman and builder, hobo and tramp, held the secret of the vast goldfields of Africa in the palm of his right hand.



## CHAPTER II

### THE GRAIN SPROUTS

GEORGE WALKER SWORE SOLEMNLY TO HIMSELF TO KEEP HIS DISCOVERY a secret. He knew, from what he had learned at the Struben Camp, that the rock he held in his hand was gold-bearing, and he believed it was the outcrop of a new reef. He told himself on that cloudless Sunday morning that here was his chance to make money. He must be shrewd and astute, though, and at all costs he must keep his mouth shut firmly.

He put the piece of rock in his coat pocket and started back toward the low white-washed farmhouse. In the kitchen the Widow Oosthuizen was busying herself with a bowl of flour. Her fat fingers were made grotesque and enormous by the glutinous white dough which clung in sticky peaks and furrows round her hands. Her voluminous rusty black dress was streaked with white where the flour had escaped over the side of the basin. Her sunbonnet, which she wore at all hours of the day, through storm or twilight evening, sat rakishly on one side of her head. She glanced up when Walker came in, smiled at him good-naturedly, and went on kneading.

In the bare unfurnished living room, Honeyball and Harrison were still talking. Harrison was sharpening a length of green stick with a rusty clasp-knife. Honeyball was telling him how a horse should be shod. Walker came in from the kitchen and sat down on a rickety chair in the corner. Neither of the two men paid any attention to him, for Honeyball was engrossed in his horses, Harrison in his stick.

Walker tried to appear as casual as these two men looked, but his hands were restless, and he kept crossing and uncrossing his legs. His right-hand pocket bulged and sagged with a heavy weight; his eyes were bright and his face was flushed. He was

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

strangely excited. He thought how curious it was that here he sat with a great golden secret in his pocket, and nobody was taking the slightest notice of him. These two men were talking calmly and monotonously about stupid things that did not matter, while he had made a discovery that would make them jump to their feet very quickly if they knew. But they must not know. He must keep this a secret.

George Walker was the Adam of Prospectors Who Meant to Keep Silent.

He went back to the kitchen to talk to the Widow Oosthuizen.

"I think," he said nonchalantly, leaning against the table, "I think I should like to prospect on Langlaagte."

The Widow Oosthuizen wiped a hand across her hot face.

"What for?" she asked.

"Oh!" said Walker, waving a hand airily, "for minerals—copper and tin, or perhaps coal. I might even find gold, you know."

"Gold on Langlaagte? You must be mad. There is no gold here. You had better go to the eastern side of the Transvaal if you want to find gold. They tell me there is plenty there. But here on Langlaagte! It is mad."

"Yes, perhaps you are right," said Walker casually; "but still, I wouldn't mind having a look. How much do you want for an option on your farm?"

The Widow Oosthuizen went on with her kitchen work. It was important that her mealie cakes should not be burned. She could not allow this man Walker to interrupt her cooking. Besides, he was talking like a fool. Gold on Langlaagte! Ridiculous! Her husband, all the years he had lived on the farm, had never talked about finding gold. And now this handyman had come along with all his modern ideas from the Cape. He was even talking about options now. Where would he get the money to buy an option? Ridiculous! He must have a touch of the sun, poor fellow!

"How much would you want?" said Walker patiently, as his fingers wandered unconsciously to close round a piece of rock in his right-hand pocket.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

The Widow Oosthuizen wanted to get on with her roosterkocks. She wanted to put a polite end to this fantastic conversation, and so she thought of the largest possible sum of money to frighten Walker away.

"Thirty pounds," she said firmly, and got up from her stool in a movement of finality.

Walker was surprised a little, but not frightened. He thanked the widow gravely, and mentioned that he intended to set off that afternoon for Potchefstroom to raise the money. The widow's reply to this was unintelligible, for her head was already half-way in the baking oven, with the roosterkocks.

George Walker wandered back to the living room. Honeyball had left the horses and was talking about sheep. Harrison was sharpening a thin strip of wood to use as a toothpick. Their apparent indifference irritated Walker. He wanted to be congratulated and interrogated. He wanted to be fussed over and fawned upon. He wanted to be the center of attention. He stood motionless in the middle of the room. His hand crept again to his pocket.

George Walker was the Adam of Prospectors Who Meant to Keep Silent but Couldn't.

"I have struck gold on this farm," he said simply.

Harrison continued to prepare the toothpick.

"I have an option on the farm, and I'm going into Potchefstroom this afternoon to raise the money."

Harrison looked up gloomily.

"I don't suppose it's payable," he said.

But Honeyball was very interested. He wanted to know where the strike had been made, how it had been made and what it was worth. Walker, flattered by this enthusiasm, offered to conduct a tour of examination, and he led Honeyball and Harrison out of the farmhouse across the stubbly veldt to the spot he had marked earlier in the day.

"It looks like iron pyrites to me," said Harrison.

That afternoon George Walker set off to walk the eighty miles that lay between Langlaagte and Potchefstroom. His eyes scanned the horizon anxiously for an ox-wagon.

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

George Honeyball hung about his aunt's farm for two or three days considering what steps he should take in connection with Walker's discovery. There was opportunity here for him, he thought, if only he could find the way to grasp it. The first thing to be done, he decided, was to make certain that the discovery was genuine, so he set off across the veldt to seek the advice of Fred Struben. Now, Struben was not there when Honeyball arrived at the camp, but he found Godfray Lys standing dejectedly in front of the small battery. He chatted pleasantly for a few minutes before producing his sample of speckled rock. Then he asked Lys to ascertain for him whether the sparkle was due to pyrites or gold. Godfray took the rock, crushed it very fine, amalgamated it with mercury, and then put it into an iron ladle on their blacksmith's forge. Presently a little button of gold appeared. Lys was interested—very interested indeed. He questioned Honeyball carefully and amiably, and when he had learned the story of Walker's discovery, he offered to ride over to Langlaagte to inspect the reef. Honeyball was naïvely grateful.

Among other options that the Strubens had negotiated for from time to time in the district was an option on the Langlaagte farm. But they had allowed this to lapse.

When Godfray Lys returned to the camp that night he had a remarkable story to tell. Walker's Reef, he said, was rich in gold, and the outcrop continued as far as the eye could see. The Reef consisted of a speckled conglomerate ore which carried heavy loads of visible gold in many places.

Fred was astounded.

"By God," he said, "this is what I have been looking for all along."

Harry Struben, who had come over to visit the camp, thought rapidly. He decided that no time must be lost, and that the Widow Oosthuizen must be made to sign a preliminary option on the farm without delay. He called Kleinboy to bring him his horse, and he set off at once on a business visit to Langlaagte.

But the Widow Oosthuizen had another and more determined visitor under her roof when Harry Struben arrived.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

When the Kimberley coach drew up before the hotel at Potchefstroom, several diamond kings alighted to stretch their legs and have a drink. They were on their way to Barberton to investigate the possibilities of putting their diamond-earned money into gold-earning propositions. Among them was a man called Joseph Robinson, who had already made a small fortune in Kimberley.

In the local bar the coach passengers, having received a good education on the diamond diggings, drank freely, talked sparingly and listened intently. The barman was talking in Dutch to a friend who had had too much to drink. The barman was explaining that some tramp had come into Potchefstroom to raise money on a gold reef which he said he had discovered over on the Widow Oosthuizen's farm at Langlaagte. The barman did not think much of this cock-and-bull story, nor, he added, did the rest of Potchefstroom. People were always claiming to have discovered gold nowadays, and it was a menace to law-abiding people to allow these thieves, with their false reports and lies, to persuade innocent men to part with money. Sheer robbery, it was.

The coach horn sounded loudly in the street, the passengers gulped down their drinks and walked out. But when the Kimberley-Barberton coach was rumbling on its way there was one empty seat. Joseph Robinson was already on his way to Langlaagte.

Now, the Widow Oosthuizen was a very hospitable creature, and Joseph Benjamin Robinson was a fine-looking young man. She invited him to spend the night under her humble roof, and he accepted very charmingly. The next morning at sunrise he went for a walk. It was some little time before he found the outcrop of the reef, but when he did, he traced it for miles along the ground. That night Robinson started, in a tactful, round-about way, to talk business to the widow. The next night Harry Struben called to talk business, and the widow began to think things out. This was the third man in a week who wanted her farm, so there must be gold. Very well, if there was gold on Langlaagte, they must pay for it, and pay highly.

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

"I'm sorry I can't talk business to you tonight," said the widow to Harry Struben, "for I have people here who are making me a very good offer. I will let you know later."

Robinson stayed at Langlaagte for one week, two weeks, a month. All day long he spent examining Walker's Reef, and at night he talked to the widow in the bare living room at Langlaagte. Just exactly what Robinson said during those long summer evenings has never been told. But the Widow Oosthuizen signed a paper one night giving J. B. Robinson the option on her farm with the right to purchase it for the sum of six thousand pounds.

Along the road between Potchefstroom and Langlaagte, George Walker trudged wearily. His pockets were empty. He had been unable to raise thirty pounds.

The news of Robinson's deal on the Witwatersrand spread quickly to Kimberley, the financial hub of South Africa. He was known among his hard-bitten business confederates as a shrewd man, and any venture which bore the name of J. B. Robinson was worthy of attention. The news spread, too, along the bleak farms of the Rand. But here Robinson was credited not with acumen, but with lunacy. The old Boer farmers chuckled among themselves as they related how some "rooinek" from Kimberley had been tricked by the Widow Oosthuizen into paying six thousand pounds for a cabbage-patch—and not a very good cabbage-patch at that. It was so mad that it was funny. They roared with laughter. But there was an occasional note of envy from some of them. Old Gert du Plessis, for example. He had been trying to sell his farm for a span of fourteen oxen for months without finding a buyer, and Jan du Toit, less exacting in his demands, had given out that he was willing to consider any reasonable offer—a gun, for instance, or a good milking-cow. But no; the rooinek had paid six thousand pounds for a piece of scrubby ground, while they had the misfortune still to be in possession of their fine lands where the grazing was good if one could afford the cattle to put out to feed.

Gert du Plessis, and his partner, Japie de Villiers, were not en-

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

vious of the Widow Oosthuizen for long, because Robinson had traced the Reef through their property, and had determined to have this land. First he bought a half-share in the property for one thousand pounds and then, shortly afterward, he bought the other half for twelve thousand pounds. The two old Boers could scarcely believe it. Japie de Villiers was terrified that some accident would befall this madman before the deal could be put through, and he rushed about after Robinson like a Mayfair mother after a debutante daughter. Gert du Plessis sat at home in a dream heaven of delight, planning delicious schemes—planning to buy himself a new cart, and one of those newfangled stoves for Maria, and, if the money would run to it, perhaps a new suit of clothes.

When the day of reckoning came, the two old Boers were waiting at their farmstead in a fever of anxiety. Robinson arrived on time with the money in golden sovereigns. The three men sat around the big bare table in the living room, and Robinson began to count the money out in piles of a hundred sovereigns. Japie de Villiers could follow up to one hundred with ease. After that he began to get muddled. Gert was muddled from the beginning and all the time. When Robinson tried to explain that sixty piles of gold each containing a hundred sovereigns made six thousand pounds both farmers were quite bewildered. They rose and walked round the table to look at the money from a different angle, they called the womenfolk in, and walked round again. Then Japie sat down to count it for himself. He counted up to a hundred easily. He counted up to a hundred sixty times, but after that he was defeated. He lapsed into a heavy silence, his eyes staring unblinkingly at the piles of gold. The silence threatened to extend itself indefinitely. Robinson started all over again to explain. It was only the whispered encouragement of Maria, who knew nothing whatever about addition but who was acutely desirous of possessing a stove, that brought the deal to a satisfactory close.

In the meantime, in Kimberley, an enterprising broker had given a public panning of the Rand conglomerate, and in so doing he had inoculated the diamond diggers with a germ of gold fever which spread like the plague. For two or three days men talked

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

of nothing else but the gold of the Transvaal. They huddled together in groups over the counters of the local pubs, they leaned against billiard tables, oblivious of the game in progress, to talk about gold. They stood in groups at the corners of the dusty un-laid streets and gathered together in little tin offices.

And then they began to move off, in ox-wagons, Scotch carts, and gigs; out of Kimberley across the open veldt toward the Rand, in search of gold.

The outskirts of this mining camp were alive with moving carts, all heading in the one direction. The coaches that plied between Kimberley and Barberton were now jammed tight with the more prosperous bodies of diamond magnates, for the men who had made money out of diamonds were anxious to make more out of gold. Rich men, poor men, fat men, thin men, little men, big men, poured out of the town, until the Mayor of Kimberley began to wonder whether he, alone, would be left to rule an empty town.

He attempted dutifully to stem the tide, but the imagination of his borough had been stirred as thoroughly as a Christmas pudding, and they heeded not the alleged municipal wisdom. They left Kimberley in any sort of vehicle that seemed likely to move. Old rickety wagons were tied up with pieces of wire and string and then pronounced road-worthy. Disused carts were brought out of the rubbish yards, and a nail was knocked in here and there as a slight precaution against dismemberment in the streets of the town, and the carts were set on their hazardous journey to the Rand. Two ambitious young men rode off in a hansom-cab.

Despite the Mayor's uneasiness, and the general exodus from the town, quite a large number of people remained behind, including most of the shrewdest of the diamond kings. They were skeptical. They did not believe the sensational reports that had come from the Rand. The formation and construction of the conglomerate beds in which the gold was reported to lie were unknown geologically. It was something quite new, and they believed that even if the gold were to occur in this formation, it would peter out at a hundred feet. It was wiser, thought the kings of Kimberley, to



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

have diamonds in the hand than gold in the bush. But the reports of the richness of the Rand persisted, and began to wear down this self-confidence. One or two of the financiers began to wonder whether they were not missing a good proposition in the Transvaal. Finally the local representatives of Rothschilds sent an expert up to the Rand to survey the lie of the land and to report on its possibilities. Kimberley waited for his return anxiously. He was not away long.

"Well?" said everyone eagerly.

"Well," said the expert, "there is not a pennyworth of payable gold on the Rand." He was very expert and very emphatic.

"Ah," said everyone who had been left behind. "Ah," they added in a pleased tone; "a Rotten Reef, eh?"

From then onward, and for quite a long time, the Witwatersrand was known as the "Rotten Reef."

The first wagons to top the Ridge of the White Waters stood for a moment above the wide plain stretching away to the north. The smoke from an occasional farmhouse somewhere on the far horizon smudged the clear sky. The wagons moved slowly down on to the plains. Presently a white tent was pegged. And then another appeared in a little cone of white against the red ground; and then another. In a week the Rand was dotted with the canvas coverings of its new citizens.

When Robinson made his deal with the Widow Oosthuizen there were but a handful of men spread along the Rand. Two weeks after there were five hundred. A month later there were two thousand people. In four months there were six thousand people living on the Rand. They came from every corner of the country. They included every type of man. Young men with fluffy chins lay down to sleep with heavy-bearded prospectors from Barberton. Jew shared his meal with Gentile; and an unwashed Boer farmer tried patiently to converse with the son of an English peer. It was any man's country, this barren stretch of ground, and it was governed, not with a rod of iron, but with a strip of gold.

At first the diggers formed themselves into little groups, or

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

camps, with small regard for symmetry, layout or hygiene. Their primary interest was to obtain good rich claims along the Reef, and in order to do this, they had to get prospecting rights from the individual owners of the farms.

Paul Kruger, sitting on the veranda of his house in Pretoria, was worried and anxious. The one event which he had always feared was now occurring under his very nose, and he was powerless to prevent it. Foreigners were streaming across the borders of the Transvaal in great hordes. From the Cape, from Kimberley, from Natal, and now they were beginning to arrive from England, Australia and California. His beloved people would be outnumbered and outwitted by these clever foxy foreigners. They would be swamped by these Uitlanders, and the freedom of their forefathers would be forfeited, unless he was more clever than they. Unless the President made this vast new people dance to the tune he called. Paul Kruger, impassive, grim and wise, sat silently smoking on his stoep.

All along the Rand now, diggers and prospectors were talking business to the simple Boer farmers, endeavoring to get prospecting rights from these men of mushroom wisdom and newborn shrewdness. Fortunately, the Mining Commissioner who had recently been appointed by the Volksraad was amenable to the particular form of reason put forward by the prospectors, and he influenced Kruger to grant mining rights, battery sites and water rights to the diggers. There was room for everybody along the fifty miles of the Reef, and each man pegged out areas for himself. The Government announced that, in order to avoid a rush, they would throw open only one area at a time for pegging.

Colonel Ferreira, working at the Booysens end of the Reef, pegged the Ferreira Mine, which proved a rich proposition. Charlton worked in with Jan Meyer, and pegged the Meyer and Charlton, another rich mine. Sam Wemmer pegged the Wemmer Mine, but, like George Walker, all these men were to die later in miserable poverty.

Now though, in the year 1886, they were young, hopeful and enthusiastic. The old Boer farmers watched the activity on the

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Rand with wide-eyed interest. Some of them understood vaguely what was happening. Others, determined to be shrewd, were easily outwitted by unscrupulousness. Piet, for example. He was selling the prospecting rights of his farm for only one hundred pounds, and was chatting away merrily about his cattle to the thin eager negotiator. There was a pile of money on the table.

"How old is your wife?" the digger interrupted the old Boer's talk.

"Forty," said Piet.

"Oh, really, forty. Forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four——" said the digger, counting out the money.

It was not always the same, of course. Straightforward business was practiced nine times out of ten. It was just that tenth time, inspired by the theme song of the mining camp which came rumbling down from the hills.

"My son, make money. Honestly, if you can; but make it."

The echoes of these words can still be heard very faintly on the Rand.

It was in September, 1886, that Paul Kruger proclaimed that a township would be marked off on the Ridge, and would henceforth be known as Johannesburg.

The announcement did not greatly interest the diggers, for it was generally held that the life of the Rand could not possibly be more than five years, and that this was a generous estimate. At first they did not even bother to put up tin shanties. Those who had not the good fortune to possess tents made themselves mud huts, and went to sleep every night with an open umbrella over their heads. Their caution was justifiable; very often—nearly always, in fact—they woke to find that the umbrella had been most inefficient, and that they were not only wet, but mud-bound, for the heavy Transvaal rains made pies of their plans. This was not important. An hour in the strong morning sun would dry their sticky wet clothes, and a new hut did not take long to build. During the day they would work on their claims, digging the reef up out of the ground as a workman digs up the earth before laying foundations, or as a dog digs up a bone.

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

The Reef began to appear as a long series of holes in the ground. It was fabulously rich near the surface, and they crushed it as best they could. But they could not catch more than half the gold—the other half was washed away in the tailings. Still, they did not care. Half a loaf, when it was a golden loaf, was certainly better than no bread. At night they sat around on the veldt, eating food out of tins, and telling bawdy stories. And then there would be poker and faro; for it was surprising how many of the diggers who had forgotten to bring pajamas and toothbrushes had remembered to bring a pack of cards.

So the days on the Rand wore on, and the number of tents and mud huts grew bigger and bigger, until Johannesburg was a vast campus of bearded, unwashed, unsavory men with gold dust in their pockets.

Gradually the wagons which had brought prospectors up to the Rand began to carry cases of whisky instead, and enterprising tradesmen opened up business on the fields. There was a chemist shop in a tent, a boarding-house, a breadshop and seventy-two pubs. Even this was not enough, for the drinking-saloons were always jammed tight with miners who would bring in bags of gold dust and drink them empty. Following the gold and the whisky, of course, came prostitutes. And then, indeed, Johannesburg was a town. Men went into the drinking-hells to get drunk and came outside to do murder.

A place called the Brickfields was a popular place for murder, and it became the fashion for men to ride out to these fields at about midnight and take pot-shots at anything they saw moving in the dark. It was a most successful game, for in less than a month more than a dozen people were murdered there. Then the sport grew wearisome, and an ambitious storekeeper supplied a new craze. He began to sell knuckle-dusters. He was law-abiding enough, though, to offer them first to the ten policemen in the town, but when they refused to acknowledge him, he felt at liberty to sell his stocks to the general public. Knuckle-dusting proved very popular, and his stocks were soon exhausted.

The open square of ground in the middle of Johannesburg

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

where the farmers sold their produce in the morning was unsafe after dark. Drunken revelers on their way home were always tripping over dead bodies. They seldom bothered to see who it was, but the morning light would show that somebody had been disemboweled with a razor, or perhaps garroted, or stabbed.

Murder was everybody's game when they were drunk or quarrelsome. The newspapers, recently established, were hardened enough to dismiss such occurrences under a single complacent headline—"Last Night's Murders." The ten policemen dressed up in canary cord suiting looked like chorus-boys in a provincial revue, and were just about as effective. There was plenty for them to do, but very little reason why they should do it, because any effort on their part to arrest miscreants was set at naught by the unusual fragility of the local prison walls.

The jail was built of a few stones, a great deal of mud and some sticks. It was always packed with prisoners undergoing sentence for robbery, murder, forgery, and so on, but the inmates of the cells were exposed to greater danger from falling masonry than from legal reprisals. There were eight warders and a jailer, and they were in despair. They sat about waiting mournfully for a good hard rain to send the pasteboard prison tumbling to the ground to release the seventy-three prisoners. But the prisoners did not wait for rain. They were more progressive. One of them was literally struck with an idea when a falling stone hit him on the head, leaving a large gaping hole in the wall. He was just crawling through when a native warder saw him and hauled him back. The prisoner made indignant representations to the head jailer, stating that it had taken him twenty-five minutes to work the hole large enough to crawl through, and he considered that his sentence ought to be set aside for this display of energy. His petition was carefully dealt with, but, after some consideration, was refused.

Very often the prisoners would range themselves in a row, and at a given command would dash themselves against the doors, bursting them down. Then they would walk calmly out. The more popular method of escape, however, was for the prisoners to

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

thrust their fists through the flimsy ceiling, clamber through the hole made, and then bump their backs hard against the roof to send the galvanized iron flying off in sheets. It was simple after that. They would either step over the wall, or walk into the warders' quarters, lock the jailers up and stroll off into town.

It was an Irishman who lost his temper when he was sent to jail. Scarcely had the key been turned on him in the cell when he ran his head in a frenzy against the wall. He was considerably surprised when this simple action brought the whole structure about his ears, and he was able to walk out after the warder into the yard. The next day another prisoner put his feet up against the north wall of the jail, and was astonished to find it move under him. Somehow he did not see the necessity for remaining indoors on that glorious sunny day, so he called to six comrades, two of whom, incidently, were condemned murderers, and together they nonchalantly pushed the wall over and walked across the yard and out of the front gate.

Those prisoners who stayed inside the jail did so more out of kindness than necessity. Besides, many of them found it the cheapest and most comfortable way of living. The jailer, having decided that he would like to increase his earnings, started a boarding-house inside the prison. Here he entertained warders and untried prisoners at very cheap rates. The cooking and service were excellent, for he ordered the native and Indian prisoners to cook the food and wait at table, and the boarders were highly satisfied with the organization placed at their disposal. There were also occasional entertainments for the less squeamish prisoners. One day, for example, the body of a native was cut up and boiled in a kitchen pot before a packed audience. One of the prisoners, however, after having either escaped or been set free, wrote a letter about this to the Press, and a shocked cry of protest rose from the people of Johannesburg. The District Surgeon, in replying officially to the charge, declared that, under the orders of the hospital doctor, the body of a native who had been killed in a mining accident, and had sustained interesting and unusual fractures, was

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

dissected, and certain parts were boiled in order to remove the flesh without disturbing the fractured bones.

"This is an operation of very frequent occurrence," he reported, "and one always resorted to by the most eminent pathologists in every country and hospital in the world, and many remarkable discoveries which have been made are due to such post-mortem researches." The District Surgeon did not explain, however, why those interesting experiments were conducted in full view of the hospital prisoners.

Such trifles as public dissection did not bother John McKeone a scrap when he thought about the prison at Johannesburg. He thought about prisons a great deal, for he was planning to rob the Krugersdorp Bank, and accidents often happened. Accidents such as being caught and sent to jail. Not that that mattered very much to John Lewis McKeone.

He was a handsome young man of twenty, with a strong stream of Irish blood running through his veins. He had been born in Basutoland, that vast wild native country, and had spent his short life roaming the high veldt on his horse, making friends with natives, learning their ways and their language, and learning to win their respect and devotion. He was a simple, good-natured young man, possessed by a strong affection for his family, and a feeling very near devotion for Brian, his black horse.

The trouble with John McKeone, though, was that he had no respect whatever for rules, or laws, conventions, or creeds, and he had a very complete disregard for the rights of property. As a child he never would believe that it was wrong to steal fruit from a laden orchard or eggs from a rich farm. And as he grew up, this handsome, gay young man practiced his unrestricted ideas quite freely; he stole fruits and eggs when he was hungry, and sometimes, if one of his friends was hard-up, McKeone would ride off on his black horse and bring back a few sheep from somewhere. He could not see that this was wrong. If anyone argued with him, he would point out that the farmer from whom he had taken the sheep was a very rich man, and that he could not miss these few animals. And so when, in the year 1887, some of his

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

young comrades suggested a plan for robbing the Krugersdorp Bank, McKeone thought the idea was splendid. After all, he reasoned, the money was lying idle in the bank, and there were poor families he knew in Basutoland who could make much better use of it. As for being sent to prison—well, the jail in Johannesburg, he had heard, was an easy place from which to escape.

One bright, cloudless morning, then, shortly after the Standard Bank had opened the doors of its Krugersdorp branch, John McKeone and his friend Joseph Turpend strolled quietly in, and, with a full sense of drama, called upon the bank officials to stand and deliver. Just for a moment there was silence, and then the clerk made a valiant dash for the side door, but he tripped on the threshold, and like a flash McKeone leaped upon him, gagged him with a cork, and fastened his hands behind his back. Hewitson, the manager, remembering a revolver in his bedroom adjoining the bank, tried to get to the door, but McKeone was too quick for him, and with a well-aimed blow from a riding-crop, the manager was knocked senseless. While Turpend stood sentry, McKeone gagged the manager, removed the keys from his pockets and proceeded to rifle the safe. First he came across bags of silver, but he flung these aside; they were too heavy and not valuable enough. Then he found the notes and the gold, and took four thousand five hundred pounds.

In the meantime, Dekker, the messenger of the bank, who had been sent out with drafts, returned to the office. Glancing casually through the window of the bank before opening the door, he was horrified to see the manager lying in a pool of blood, while two armed men were crouching over the safe. Dekker did not wait to defend his boss. He took to his heels and fled to the police station, to tell his story. Meanwhile, McKeone and Turpend, unconscious of the fact that they had been seen, calmly gathered up their booty, walked out of the bank and unhitched their horses from the magistrate's fence. They rode at a trot out of the village, taking the dusty track which led to Johannesburg.

Dekker's story to the police drew a posse of constables, and they galloped off at once in pursuit of the robbers, who were soon



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

glimpsed some distance ahead, casually mounting the brow of a hill. But the sound of flying hoofs behind him made McKeone turn, and when he saw that he and Turpend were being chased by the police, they put their horses to the gallop and left the officers miles behind on the dusty track. Sergeant Tossel, leading the police, realized that his horse was tiring, and as he drew near the iron shack known as the Witpoortje Hotel, he called for a new mount. Luck was on the side of the law that morning, for the racer Atlas was in the hotel stables, and although McKeone's Black Brian was the fastest horse in the country, he could not outstrip a fresh, ungalloped racer.

Tossel knew that now the game was in his own hands. On he galloped in chase, past transport wagons loaded with provisions and machinery for Johannesburg, past farmers' carts loaded with produce, past Wall's Hotel, along the track to Johannesburg. Tossel drew nearer and nearer. Now the robbers turned off the road on to the open veldt, but their horses were getting blown, and McKeone realized that the game was over. Not quite over, though. He pulled Brian up sharply, dismounted, and standing at the side of his black horse, took careful aim and fired at the galloping policeman. He raised his arm to fire again, but this time Tossel's shot found its mark and McKeone was winged. The game was over now. McKeone and Turpend stood motionless in the middle of the veldt waiting for the police to come up. Only one thing pleased McKeone about the arrest, and that was that he had thrown the gold away along the road.

The next day McKeone and Turpend were sentenced by an angry magistrate to twenty-five years' imprisonment and were lodged in the Johannesburg jail.

Unfortunately, regulations and conditions had been considerably tightened up in the Johannesburg prison when McKeone and Turpend arrived. But the young Irishman bided his time patiently, and made himself as comfortable as possible in the meantime. His carefree, laughing nature, his impudent, charming personality soon made him a firm favorite with the warders, and he spent many an hour telling them stories of his adventures in

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

Basutoland. But McKeone had resolutely determined not to spend twenty-five years in jail. He and his fellow prisoners arranged an elaborate plan to overpower their German guard and make good their escape into the surrounding wild country. The German was a good fellow, but it had to be done. The night before the time fixed for the escape, one of the prisoners in the plot, anxious to win a remission of his sentence, informed the governor of the jail of the plan afoot. A double guard was put on duty, and McKeone lost the first round.

He set about his next scheme more subtly. He and his colleagues decided to dig a tunnel from the floor of their cell through the newly strengthened prison wall, out into the yard. But the German warder, suspicious now, and not a little resentful that these convicts had planned to knock him senseless, watched McKeone ceaselessly, and one night he detected the plot. Thus round number two went to the Johannesburg jail.

The prisoners were guarded now with scrupulous attention. The warders never took their eyes off McKeone, and the friendly feelings they once harbored for him were turned to suspicion and anger. But the young Irishman had made one friend among the warders, a man named Cooper, whose admiration and loyalty for McKeone never waned.

For two months McKeone conformed to the prison regulations as docilely as any petty thief, but during that time he managed to communicate, through Cooper, with his brother, and he arranged that Black Brian should wait in Johannesburg for him at a given place on the morning of March the third.

Just before dawn on the day of escape, Cooper slipped into McKeone's cell with some old convict clothes and a bag of soot. Then, assuming the air of a conscientious warder, he stood on guard outside the door. McKeone hastily donned the soiled clothes; then he smeared the soot thickly all over his face, neck, arms and hands. With a friendly smile of thanks to his ally, he slipped outside his cell, and mingled with the native prisoners who were carrying out the night soil. John Lewis McKeone went into the garden with the gang. He carried his bucket of refuse

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

over the lawn, across the yard, through the front gates, and there in the shadows, his friend Cooper, the warder, stood waiting for him with Black Brian and a horse for himself. He had decided to ride for liberty with his daring young friend. And so, in the dawn of a March morning, two horses galloped swiftly away from the Johannesburg prison. Round number three was McKeone's.

Soon after his escape the alarm was raised in the prison, and Lieutenant Heugh, the crack member of the Transvaal Mounted Police, gave chase.

The two friends rode furiously for liberty. Brian galloped like the wind. Along the Kimberley road, through Klip River, across the Vaal into the Orange Free State. Mile after dusty mile. Hour after anxious hour. The sun was scorching, the red ground was hard and uneven beneath the flying hoofs of the horses. The flight for freedom was desperate.

There were relays of horses posted along the road for Heugh, as he followed the dust of the fugitives. On and on galloped Black Brian, over the hot stony miles, through the hours into the night. But the gallant horses grew exhausted; they moved more and more slowly, and with each mile, Heugh, freshly mounted, grew closer. Now, at last, he was within a hundred yards of McKeone. Through the darkness the policeman imagined the shadowy forms of the fugitives. He clearly heard the sound of galloping hoofs. He urged his mount forward confidently, remembering the warrant for arrest in his pocket. Suddenly the sound of hoofs died. There was silence. Heugh dashed forward. The night was pitch dark. The road was empty. It stretched blankly before him. He looked about anxiously. There was nothing. The thick shrubbery on each side of the ride was still and undisturbed. The minutes passed as he searched for the men who had been within an ace of his grasp, but they were gone. They had been swallowed up by the night. Disappointed and angry, Heugh turned his horse back along the road to Pretoria.

In the shrubbery on one side of the dark road, Brian stood motionless with his rider on his back. When at last the sound of

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

Heugh's retreating horse had faded into the horizon, the two friends wearily took the road again.

But Heugh was not the only policeman searching for McKeone. A small army of mounted men had been detailed off to comb the district for him. They asked all the natives in this wild bare country for information about McKeone. Had they seen a young man on a black horse? He had ridden this way. It would be well for the black men to tell the police. It would be well for them to show the white men where to find McKeone and his friend Cooper. But every Basuto, even to Mama the Chief of all Basutos, was a fast friend of McKeone. They had known him when he was a child, and had played and hunted with him in the Basuto hills; they had ridden with him, and he had eaten food in their huts. And so, the answer to the police was always, No. No, the black man had seen no white man pass that way.

On Wednesday morning two of the Mounted Police sighted McKeone and Cooper far ahead. They spurred on after them, believing they would bring the fugitives to halt on the steep banks of the Rhenoster River. But McKeone, hearing the approach of horsemen, turned his head to see who followed, and when he distinguished the galloping police figures, he murmured a word of encouragement to Brian, and then urged the horse down the twenty-foot bank into the river. Together man and horse, devoted friends, began to swim the swirling waters. Half-way across, McKeone turned to make sure that Cooper was following. The ex-warder was still on the river bank trying to persuade his unwilling horse to take the plunge. Nearer and nearer drew the police. Cooper's horse pranced nervously on the water's edge. Amid-stream McKeone turned Brian and swam back to the bank. Then, reaching out, he pulled Cooper's horse down by the bridle and pulled him through. And on again they went, over the stubble and burning veldt. But now the horses were quite exhausted by fatigue. McKeone jumped down and ran behind Brian, holding his hand on the horse's tail. When the horse had recovered his wind, he vaulted back into the saddle, and away galloped the black animal, with Cooper riding alongside.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

The police followed behind. One of them, having a great respect for McKeone's ingenuity, determined to put an end to this record ride. He raised his rifle, took careful aim and fired.

But an instant before, McKeone had turned his head to see the raised arm and pointed gun. He shouted to Cooper, and simultaneously the two men drew their horses apart. The bullet passed between them. McKeone knew when he was beaten though. He knew it now. He pulled up his panting horse, leaped down, removed the saddle, and stood talking softly to Brian, and patting the horse gently while he waited for the police to draw level.

He surrendered without any protest, but, he explained, the only reason he gave himself into the hands of the law was that he did not wish to kill his horse. He and the faithful Cooper were placed under arrest, and taken to the wood and iron police shack at Vaal River. Round number four went to the police.

McKeone seemed quite resigned and cheerful, and made not the slightest attempt to escape. Their captors were placed on guard over the men during the night. But the two officers who had chased the fugitives for nearly ten hours across the burning veldt could not keep awake. They were exhausted. They awoke with the dawn to find that McKeone and Cooper had escaped during the night. McKeone had left his much-loved Brian well stabled in the police barracks, while he and Cooper made their way on foot across the country in the direction of Mama's native village. Round five to the Irishman.

Toward the end of March, McKeone and Cooper arrived, footsore and weary, at the little settlement of native huts in the Basutoland hills. Here, among their black-skinned friends, they were safe. But it was here, in the remote wilderness of the country, that McKeone stumbled across a tragedy which stirred him more deeply than any experience he had yet suffered. Despite his contempt for convention, and his disregard for the rules of society, the comedy became drama when the play was acted in his own back yard.

It was here, in Mama's village, that McKeone learned that his sister Martha had married the native Chief Jonathan. All thoughts

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

of precaution left him, as he sat down to write to his brother in Krugersdorp of the disaster that had befallen his family.

"I have seen Martha," he wrote. "She is living with the native chief Jonathan. Break the news gently to Mother. I have tried to persuade her to go home, but it is useless; she refuses. I enclose a letter from her to me, so you can judge how matters stand. It is an awful scandal, and as far as I can find out, she is to blame. Anyhow, do not judge her too rashly—yet it is an awful thing.

"And I firmly believe she is not in her right senses. But, Bernard, cheer Mother up; stand by her in all her trials, and get yourself in no trouble, for, God knows, her trials are great. Yet she has been the best of mothers to us all—nothing that has happened is like the present affair of Martha's. Fancy your sister being the wife of a native chief! What has induced her to such a purpose I know not, for he is far from being a good-looking native. His wealth must have been the object. She is making her own bed and will have to lie on it, for I do not see that Jonathan is to blame. A man must receive some encouragement from a woman. I say she is to blame, although, of course, the priests or nuns might have tried to stop matters as soon as their suspicions were aroused. But now it is clear they did not. I cannot relish her taste or choice, but she fancies she knows best. She is determined in her choice——"

The letter he enclosed from Martha was written from the native village Tsikiam.

"I cannot make up my mind to leave here," she wrote. "I feel too much attached to Jonathan now; you must not say I am selfish, for really I cannot help it. Perhaps in one or two years' time I might be disgusted with this quiet and lonely sort of life, but I doubt it. I am now so used to it that I feel it hard to change.

"Oh, my brother, I know that, as you said to me, this will

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

be a cause of sorrow to you all; but what can I do? I cannot for an instant think of leaving; therefore I can only say, forgive me for the pain I cause you, and then forget me altogether. God knows where I will end——”

While he was writing letters, McKeone thought he might as well write to the State Secretary of the Volksraad at Pretoria, and come to some business arrangement with the authorities. So he took a clean sheet of paper, addressed it, “Whereabouts, Anonymous, April 1st, 1890,” and proceeded to put his case to the authorities.

“Sir,” he wrote, “this is to inform you that I, the undersigned, a prisoner at large, seek to come to terms of peace with the Government of the South African Republic. It is clear up to the present I have proved myself up to the mark. So I would ask your Government to consider that I have committed myself but once in your State, and up to that time bore a good character. I also ask you to notice the manner my crime was done in. Was there any want of manliness? Again, I would ask, how is it that most men that have had a hand in arresting me regret their share in so doing, almost as soon as they come to know me? Now, once I am out of your State, why not leave me in peace, providing I bind myself never to enter the South African Republic again? For, bear in mind, if I am to be hunted about everywhere, and am ever to be on the alert for fear of capture, I might as well retaliate, for if I cannot settle down, it stands to reason that it would be as well for me to return to your State and commit a series of crimes, if for nothing else but to be avenged and get a notorious name.

“But such is not my ambition, and thus I ask you to consider that any man is liable to make a false step. But why, for one false step, is a man to be punished all his life? Is it not better to give him an opportunity to reform—and is it likely that twenty-five years imprisonment can reform a man?

“So I ask you kindly to consider my case well, and will await and expect an answer through the *Government Gazette* within twenty-four days. Should your Council come to the con-

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

clusion of leaving me in peace, I would beg you to consider the case of my companion, Joseph Richard Turpend——”

Having made what he considered a fair and reasonable offer to the Volksraad, John Lewis McKeone waited for their reply.

But the letter he had written to his family telling them of his whereabouts fell into the hands of the authorities, and the last round went to the police. He was arrested one bright morning as he strolled through the little native village in Basutoland. He was taken to the prison at Pretoria and was put in chains. He never escaped again.

It was a knockout round.

In the meantime, Johannesburg was rapidly changing from a settlement of white tents into a town of wood and iron buildings. The single store where everyone gathered to hear the news and to buy or sell claims was challenged by other tradesmen, who brought goods up by wagon from Capetown and Durban and sold them at their own prices on the fields. The open-air auctioneers who sold anything from a pair of trousers to a silver mug, or a pitcher of drinking water, were forced by competition to pack up their trestles and move off the streets into the more refined, but less profitable privacy of four walls.

The Post Office, which began its operations on the fields by employing a weekly runner between Johannesburg and Pretoria, extended its contacts with the outside world by negotiating agreements with the transport services running wagons to Natal and the Cape. Gone were the days, very soon, when a digger would stand all morning before the Post Office tent while the Postmaster shouted out in alphabetical order the names of all those for whom there were letters.

Johannesburg had passed the kindergarten stage, and had reached standard one. All over the country, especially in Kimberley, vast sums of money were being subscribed to exploit the Reef. The shroud of suspicion that had draped the stability of the Rand was lifted at one corner, and money was poured into



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

schemes for the development of properties on which, in many cases, there was no reasonable prospect of finding a shilling's worth of gold. The mere mention of the Rand was enough to loose the purse strings of the most cautious, and to open wide the banking accounts of the adventurous. Here indeed was a rich harvest for unscrupulous promoters, and they reaped the unguarded crops eagerly. Within two years no less than four hundred and fifty mining companies were formed. The assets of the bulk of these companies were, apart from other people's money, a sort of mischievous hope that all they had said on their prospectus might come true.

It very seldom did, and many an unhappy subscriber slipped back into the habit of referring to the Witwatersrand as "Rotten Reef." The consequent slump called forth a stern letter from Ralph Charles Williams, Queen Victoria's agent at Pretoria.

"Up to the present," he wrote, "your valuable mines have existed in great part on speculative hopes—on promotion schemes and on the bulling and bearing of mining properties and land companies; with the result that public expectations have been unfulfilled. A legitimate statement of the actual resources of the great companies, and a wholesome exposure of the gross frauds so plausibly imposed upon the public, whether in mining or land schemes, a lesser promotion and a greater production, can alone re-establish the Transvaal mines in the minds of the investing public."

But the real gold-mining companies went on working quietly and steadily. They went on crushing the rich ore with their crude machinery, and they went on losing half the gold. With the other half they imported more machinery, and it was delivered from the ports in small pieces on ox-wagons. They went on puzzling over the lie of the Reef, which dipped enigmatically away from their drills, and they went on wondering whether the Reef could possibly go as far down as a thousand feet.

Sam Wemmer lost the Reef on his mine, and could not trace it again. He was desperate, for he had not the money to pay his

## THE GRAIN SPROUTS

license fees. He went forlornly to his property to close it up, and that morning, quite by accident, he struck the Reef again. He sold his property soon after to the Wemmer Mine Company for eighty thousand pounds.

A little band of prospectors, searching for gold, found coal instead, and soon long lines of carts carried fuel to the Rand. All along the Reef the holes made for gold grew bigger and deeper. But it was not easy to carry on. Each month brought a fresh problem to the industry, a problem which always seemed insuperable to those brawny, sunburned men who at first knew so little about mining.

They couldn't get machinery up to the Witwatersrand; they couldn't persuade the natives to work on the mines; they couldn't get water; they couldn't catch the gold; they couldn't trace the continuation of the Reef. But they went on trying.

And every night they forgot their troubles in the town, where there were rattling matches and dance-halls, boxing bouts, and always enough whisky even though the population had jumped to twenty-five thousand people. There was a lottery, and a circus, and Luscombe Searelle brought a theatrical company and all its props in ox-wagons to Johannesburg and opened his program with *East Lynne* in a wood and iron building. After the first night he spent most of his time trying to stop his actresses eloping with the miners.

When, in the summer, there was a severe drought and water famine, those who had spent all their money in the bars went about dirty, while those who could afford to be clean had soda-water baths.

The noise of hammering and banging grew to be a permanent symphony of the dusty streets, as workmen put up buildings overnight for the people of Johannesburg.

And away over the hills in Pretoria, President Kruger sat on his stoep, smoking his pipe, and catching the sounds of progress from the still warm air.

### CHAPTER III

## OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE, AGAINST THE PEOPLE

A LOW WHITE-WASHED HOUSE WITH A THATCHED ROOF, IN THE MARKET Square of Pretoria, housed the Parliament of the South African Republic. It was from here that Johannesburg and the goldfields and all the land across the Vaal were governed. Each morning at nine o'clock a little boy in ragged trousers would hoist the flag of the country at the corner of the pavement—a flag of red, white and blue with a broad emerald-green stripe running down the side. The bell would ring, and the representatives of the people, dressed sometimes in top hats and rusty, faded morning coats, or in open-necked shirts and riding breeches, would stroll into the Council room to conduct the business of the country.

They sat round a baize-covered horseshoe table in a long narrow room with a canvas ceiling and bare, whitewashed walls. At one end of the chamber was a raised platform, on which the President sat under an archway of drapery which embraced the national colors. Next to the presidential chair was a large brass spittoon, of which Kruger took frequent advantage with an unfailing accuracy of projection. He always wore a narrow-brimmed top hat, and his large stomach was made even more prominent by the broad sash of emerald green which sloped across his body to disappear under the lapels of his shabby black coat.

Kruger was a man of bold, coarse features. The outline of his face was fringed from ear to ear by a half-halo of beard which started below his chin and dripped over his neck. The rest of his face was bare and smooth. His eyes were small, direct and piercing; they were couched in pronounced pouches of flesh. His nose was broad and ill-defined. His mouth was heavy-lipped.

Paul Kruger was a simple, honest, straightforward man with a

Johannesburg is proclaimed a public diggings. The official notice in the government gazette in September, 1886.



## THE PEOPLE

will of iron and a heart of steel. His single-track mind viewed every problem and crisis that presented itself to him in the light of simplified Nature stories or Biblical allegories. He would compare the growth of civilization spreading before him with the progress of the trees and flowers that sprang up after rain, with the march of Nature. He would compare the ways of men with the ways of wild animals which he knew and understood so well, and always, inevitably, he would relate his findings to the teachings of his beloved Bible.

This process of judgment served him well, and earned for him the name of a great leader among his own people, and of a shrewd old man among the people of the goldfields. All the early prejudices of his trekker youth stayed fast with him. His fine, splendid courage never left him, and to the outside world he was a man of powerful strength. But he was always afraid in his heart—terribly afraid—that the new race of foreigners which had swarmed to the goldfields would beat down his Boers into the dust and mud of their own country.

At first, after the proclamation of the goldfields, he did nothing and said nothing, but he watched suspiciously. Then, as the Reef was opened up and the gold-bearing rock of his country came up from the earth in bucket-loads, to put money in the pockets of the foreigners, Kruger decided that he and his people must have a share in this wealth.

One of the first moves he took in this direction was to inaugurate a system of monopolies. This amounted, in essence, to no more than an officially approved, Government-sanctioned scheme of graft, although it labored under the euphemistic title of "concessions." The plan allowed for the granting of industrial monopolies to any man who could pay the Government's price, and who could, at the same time, win the approval of the President for personal reasons.

Thus the monopoly of making spirits and strong drink was given to Nellmapius. For thirty years, under the terms of his agreement, this one man had the sole right of producing liquor in the South African Republic, and this little privilege cost him the sum

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

of one thousand pounds a year, which money was paid over to the Council of the Volksraad. The term "strong drink" was taken full advantage of by Nellmapius, for he turned out a whisky which tore the skin off the throats of the miners and made them come back, a trifle unsteadily, for more.

After this, Kruger and his band of obedient Boers proceeded to give out concessions with unflagging energy. They granted the monopoly of smelting iron to one man, of making paper to another; they handed out concessions for the manufacture of bread, for the transmission of power by electricity, for the production of soaps, for woollen stuffs, rope and cord, lead pipes, furniture, matches, paint—and dynamite.

Any man who knew how to handle the President, and could afford to pay the price, was able to obtain the sole right to manufacture and sell any commodity. Thus concession-hunting in the South African Republic became a mad race to please the President and the People's Parliament. Lithuanians learned to speak Dutch, Englishmen learned to drink coffee instead of brandy, Scotchmen learned to pay their way into the audiences of the Council, and diamond kings learned to be obsequious and to buy expensive presents. And in this way the Volksraad learned how to increase its revenue by about twenty thousand pounds a year.

To what extent the President and Council benefited personally by the granting of concessions has never been told. But outside Kruger's house in Pretoria there are still to be seen a pair of marble lions, one of which looks very coy and the other most surprised, given to the President at great expense by Barney Barnato. To ask why this gift was made is to receive the unsatisfactory reply that Kruger wanted the lions.

Of all the concessions given, only one ruffled the even temper of the goldfields, and that was the dynamite monopoly. This concession was granted to Edward Lippert for a period of sixteen years, and provided him, or his company, with the sole right to manufacture and sell all ammunition and explosives. Lippert contracted to pay the Government three thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds a year for this right in addition to two shillings on

## THE PEOPLE

every case sold, and in return the Government promised to prohibit the import of all dynamite into the country. For two years the mining industry on the Rand suffered the concession in silence, and then, in 1889, with the formation of the Chamber of Mines, they protested violently to the Government against the properties of the local dynamite, declaring that it was inefficient, dangerous and very costly to the industry.

This outburst of the industry was due, not so much to the quality of the dynamite as to the fact that the Rand was slowly beginning to appreciate that it was paying heavily for the privilege of gold-mining, and the dynamite monopoly was chosen as a pretty sound excuse for starting an argument.

The Chamber of Mines was very active on its inception, and it estimated that out of a revenue of one million five hundred and seventy-seven thousand four hundred and forty-five pounds the Government received eight hundred and eighty-two thousand one hundred and ninety-five pounds directly from the goldfields in taxes—in customs dues, transfer dues, diggers' licenses, prospecting licenses, leases, stamp tax, road tax, fines, and so on. Despite its youthful ardor, the Chamber of Mines was probably right.

The Government, however, adhering steadfastly to one of its golden rules, did nothing.

In the meantime, on the Rand the diggers had discovered that gold-mining was not a poor man's profession. The rich outcrop of surface ore had been mined, and to continue development, heavy and expensive machinery was needed. Even then, the engineers were by no means certain that the Reef persisted. Many of them, surprised at the stability it had shown so far, argued with all the force and knowledge at their command that the gold-bearing rock could not possibly persist. The geological formation of the Reef proved emphatically, they said, that it was no more than the uptilted bed of a river, and for this reason alone it must pinch out at any moment.

It was the money made in diamond diggings in Kimberley that eventually went to build the foundations of the modern Witwatersrand. If some little child had not found that pretty pebble



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

on the banks of the Orange River some years previously, the history of the Rand would have proved a very different account. The difficulties and problems that had already confronted the industry, and were still to present themselves with greater magnitude, would almost certainly have conquered the humble prospector, and have defeated the hopeful digger. As it was, though, the offensive attack put up by big capital and heavy banking accounts, reinforced with a greed for increasing these reserves and a fear of losing them altogether, harassed the stubborn defensive of the silent secretive gray rock. The fight went on. There was no certainty about the result. In 1890 the issue hung doubtfully in the balance.

In order to continue the operations of ordinary mining on the Rand, it was necessary now to sink shafts and take the position seriously. This meant the importation of machinery, first by ship from England, then by ox-wagon from either Capetown or Durban. Now, an ox-wagon is a picturesque vehicle, but one wholly unsuited for transporting weighty stamp batteries, cumbersome dynamos and clumsy iron engines. But there was no other way. There was no railway communication between Johannesburg and the rest of the country.

So the ox-wagons toiled their way like great wooden tortoises over the hills, across the deep cracked dongas, through swirling rivers, and across dry river-beds, carrying mammoth iron wheels, rails and rock drills, nuts and bolts, buckets and wire-netting, locks, hinges, staples, chains. They creaked and groaned over the thousand miles that separated Johannesburg from Capetown, and the oxen sweated and strained as they were urged forward with the long stinging whip.

The roads to Johannesburg, or rather the tracks through the veldt, were lined with broken-down wagons and their rusting freight. The mines on the Reef waited pessimistically for their machinery to arrive. If they waited long enough, the chances were that it would be found perhaps five hundred miles away, lying on the veldt beside a rotting wagon.

And although ox-wagons are picturesque vehicles, they prove a

## THE PEOPLE

very expensive form of charming nonsense when they are carrying machinery on order for serious work.

For many months past Johannesburg had been asking Kruger and his Government to construct a railway communication between the Rand and the coast. They had begged, prayed, sulked and sworn. They had pointed out that it was impossible to continue work on the mines unless transport conditions were made more favorable, and they had taken particular care to draw the attention of the Volksraad to the enormous loss in revenue the country would sustain if evil befell the mining industry. The big men of the Rand went to Pretoria in person. They sat on the veranda of Kruger's house. They talked Dutch, which they disliked; they drank coffee, which they hated; they bought expensive presents. But they did not get their railways.

Kruger sat listening to their arguments, unmoved. When they grew excited, he pulled away quietly at his great curved pipe. When they began to talk about State finances, he listened intently, and said no word. When they grew angry, he smiled. Kruger was not going to be caught in this way. Oh, no. They wanted railways, did they? Of course they wanted railways. They wanted to connect his State with all the other provinces of the country. They wanted to throw open wide the gates of the South African Republic to the whole world. Well, they wouldn't be given this chance they were seeking so anxiously. To build a railway line to the coast would be to invite—yes, invite—every foreigner, every Uitlander on the face of the globe to his State. It was funny to think of inviting them in, when all he really wanted to do was to chase them out. Railways meant food pouring into his country, too. His farmers could provide all the food that Johannesburg needed. Yes, of course they wanted railways to bring people and food to the Republic, to tramp and tread on his farmers, to snap their fingers in his face. Well, they wouldn't get the chance. That was all.

The big men went back to the Rand, but leaving behind their expensive presents, in the forlorn hope that Kruger, in a wave of gratitude at their generosity, would relent. But Kruger was never

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

grateful to the foreigner. The big men had very little to report to their mining colleagues because Kruger, of course, had said nothing, and would see that the Volksraad said nothing.

In Johannesburg the Chamber of Mines continued to work things out for its members, and told them in a dignified way what they already knew about the effect of transport on the mines.

"The industry," it reported, "is in danger of failure unless steps be taken to remove the difficulties under which it labours. The chief obstacle to the prosperity of the mining industry is the cost, delay, and uncertainty of transport of machinery, food and general supplies, owing to the absence of railway communication with the coast. Last year alone £1,950,618 was spent in transporting goods to Johannesburg. A saving of £1,430,454 would have been effected by means of railway transport.

"The construction of railways would enable a very large number of reefs of moderate and low-grade ore which at present cannot be worked (a mine yielding ten pennyweights is a loss under present conditions and cannot be worked) to be opened up with profitable results, and would ensure the wide extension of the goldfields into districts which now are necessarily neglected or abandoned."

But the attention which this very proper statement should have received from the mining industry was lacking. A newer and far more serious problem than the need for railways had occurred on the Rand, to absorb the energies of the mining population. It did not matter so much that they could not get the machinery to work the mines, because now they could not get the gold free.

The doom of Witwatersrand echoed perilously close to the freshly dug holes that stretched themselves out along the Reef. The oxidized ore which had dipped into the ground from the surface for a few hundred feet had disappeared. In its place the miners encountered a sheet of pyritic ore. The iron pyrites coated the gold, and when the rock was crushed, the gold now cased in pyrites could not be caught on the plates. More than eighty per

## THE PEOPLE

cent of the gold brought up from the ground slipped away from the plates to be washed out in the tailings. The little free gold contained in the rock was poor consolation to the industry. It was not enough to pay expenses.

This, then, was the problem that confronted the industry—the problem of how to prevent the gold from slipping through their fingers. However hard they tried, whatever they did, however much they persisted, the miners of the Rand could find no solution. They had been struck a deadly blow. There was apparently no cure. The funeral march sounded along the Witwatersrand, gathering up the hopes and beliefs of the people, and enveloping the town of Johannesburg in a mournful finale of despair. The speckled band of gray rock lay quietly in the earth. It was useless now. One by one the people of Johannesburg locked up their shops and offices and crept away. The story of Johannesburg was ended for them. It was the story of the Rotten Reef. Grass grew in the streets, and the dust settled in thick layers on the town.

But the capitalists and mine owners would not surrender until every ally had been called into the field. They plunged more and more money into their ineffectual attack. They tried one invention, one patent after another; but still the iron pyrites clung tenaciously to the gold, and whisked it away from the plates. Nothing, it seemed, could ever part the two metals. The cost of mining the fragmentary residue was prohibitive. The white flag was taken out and dusted. But before it could be hoisted a Scotchman named MacArthur won the battle for the mine owners in a little laboratory in Edinburgh. He had found a way of freeing the gold.

The MacArthur-Forrest process, like many another important discovery, was extremely simple. It was based on the strong affinity that cyanide has for gold in preference to baser metals. The method employed in this process was to dissolve the gold in cyanide, leaving the pyrites unattacked. The cyanide solution containing the dissolved gold was then passed through a mass of metallic zinc, and in the course of this operation the zinc replaced the gold in solution, and the gold itself was deposited as a black

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

powder, which was then separated from the remainder of the zinc by sieving. The black slime was then mixed with oxide of lead, carbon and carbonate of soda and charged into a furnace. The resulting lead bullion was subjected to further heat to form comparatively pure gold.

The MacArthur-Forrest cyanide process was first introduced on the Rand in 1890, when it saved the life of the mines. The system is still in use today, and has to its credit not only the development of the Witwatersrand, but also a respectable list of perhaps not such respectable millionaires.

Once the scare occasioned by the threatened death of the industry—a menace which could not, for once, be laid at the door of Parliament—had faded, the mining population had time and cause to remember the necessity for obtaining railway communication. And now, having come through a crisis which left them sensitive and apprehensive, the industry took up the demand for railways in full-throated chorus. They had been dangerously ill, hovering between life and death for weeks; they had recovered to find that their governess was harsh and unsympathetic, even during their convalescence. They began to feel badly treated, first on one score, and then, as they thought about it more, on a score of scores. They were heavily taxed, to provide the main economic support of the whole country; they had not a vote, a single word, in the government of the State; ridiculous monopolies were granted which reacted heavily against them; there were no railways. The most obvious nail to hammer was the last one, and so, with one accord, they demanded railway communication.

Kruger was not so certain of his step now as he had been. The noise from Johannesburg grew deafening. He wondered—

And yet it would be a fatal move to give these foreigners their way. The clamor grew louder, but there was no echo from Pretoria.

Then Kruger's own teacher and guide, the earth and the heavens, stepped in and led the way. The country was seized in the grip of a drought—not a playful little drought such as calls forth headlines in English newspapers, but a grim devil of a

## THE PEOPLE

drought which suffocated the country and squeezed the blood out of its veins. For months past there had been no drop of rain. The withered grass was scorched to charred straw by the sun. The river-beds were thick with dust. The mealie plants, the corn, the greenstuff of the fields, were struck down by the sun. The animals of the farms died of thirst and starvation, and the simple Boer farmers gathered to pray for rain; but it did not come. They fired cannon into the occasional clouds, hoping to split them open and release their water. But the clouds hurried away from the onslaught, leaving a clear burning sky. The drought continued. One morning early in October the people of the Republic woke to face a famine. The lumbering ox-wagons dragging their way from the coast were bringing machinery to the Rand, but no food. The farms stretching along the ridge into the north were graveyards.

There was in the town enough food for eleven days, if it were rationed out carefully. After that forty thousand people, black and white, would have to starve unless some very urgent measure was taken at once. The people of the Rand, led by the Chamber of Mines, petitioned the Government for help. And now Kruger had to act, and act quickly. The position was ugly and dangerous. On the advice of the mining industry, the Government, shaken out of their usual somnolence, immediately voted a sum of five thousand pounds for the alleviation of distress. This money was to be used as a carrot before the donkey. It was to be distributed in bonuses of twenty pounds to the first two hundred and fifty wagoners to arrive in Johannesburg with flour, Boer meal, mealies and mealie meal. The Government's offer was gazetted, and there followed a new and different rush to the Rand. The ox-race had begun. They came from the Cape, from Griqualand West, from Natal. They came from the Orange Free State. Every vehicle on four wheels was commandeered, filled with food, and sent rolling up to the Rand. The African landscape was dotted with sweating oxen and rumbling wagons. The air hummed with the cracking of whips. Natal sent nearly six hundred wagons in a fortnight, Bechuanaland sent two hundred. The Kimberley

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

teams were on the road for thirteen days, and they staggered into Johannesburg just as the last bag of meal was rationed out. In the nick of time, one and a half million pounds of food came pouring into the empty cupboards of the Rand.

Perhaps it was this specter of famine which frightened Kruger. Perhaps it was the flood of petitions which streamed toward him from Johannesburg. Perhaps it was the fact that Cecil Rhodes was building railways from the Cape right up to the border of his Republic that finally decided him.

At any rate, with an uneasy feeling in his mind, and a sense of approaching disaster in his heart, the President gave the word to his followers, and in June, 1890, the Parliament of Pretoria unanimously agreed to the immediate construction of a main trunk-line from Delagoa Bay to the Rand.

Now, Kruger was a cautious player. He passed the first round, he passed the second round; but he held several trumps and the ace of a major suit. He played his ace out first. He gave a concession for the building of the railway line from Delagoa Bay to the Netherlands Railway Company of Amsterdam. To make matters worse, the proper name of this company was *Nederlandsche Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorwegmaatschappij*.

The monopoly of this unpronounceable company over the new railway line was to remain in force for ninety-nine years. A comforting little concession this—comforting at least to Kruger; for the largest shareholder in the firm was the Government of the South African Republic, and Kruger, through his Commissioner of Railways, could, and fully intended to, exercise paramount control over it. Well, the foreigners in Johannesburg had wanted railways, had shrieked and cried and shouted for them. Now they were going to get them.

The railroad builders took their time over constructing the line—and they took a great deal of money too. After all, what was the good of having a monopoly unless one could have a little comfort and ease with it? One must have a certain amount of leisure, and make a good profit as well. That was the motto of all good monopolists, and who is to say that the N.Z.A.S. was not

## THE PEOPLE

a good monopolist? At least, they saw the job through, for in September, 1892, much to the surprise of the Johannesburg people, the railway connecting the Rand to Delagoa Bay was completed. It was also linked up with the Cape route. This was to tease Rhodes. It was the lion tamer tweaking the lion's tail. Kruger, courageous as he was, would never have done it had he not felt pretty safe. But he thought—it seemed an infallible judgment—that his Delagoa Bay line, which separated the port from Johannesburg by only four hundred miles, must beat Rhodes and his thousand miles of line to the Cape. But Kruger could not have been very good at mathematics, for when his trains started running, he was horrified to find that the heavy expenses incurred in building the Delagoa Bay line made it possible for Rhodes to offer cheaper tariffs on the Cape run, and thus win away the Rand traffic.

Kruger was very angry. He had been bitten. Damning the economic consequences, he tried to capture the trade of the mining industry by offering preferential rates on the Delagoa Bay system. But the mining industry could not be persuaded. They had tried the N.Z.A.S. line and had found it unreliable, uncertain and lazy. It was conducted, too, by a staff of employees imported from Holland. Whether this was a significant factor in the attitude of the industry has never been proved. Whether the racialism and bitter hatred that were to tear apart the Dutch and English in later years were already at work over the Delagoa Bay railway line has not been clearly revealed. Whether the resentment gradually springing up between Boer and Briton in the Republic was adult enough to take a hand in the business affairs is uncertain. But it is clear enough that the great commercial public of the Witwatersrand found that they preferred to support Rhodes rather than Kruger.

Kruger, very naturally, was infuriated by this, and retaliated by making the rates on that strip of the Cape railway which had to cross the Republic so high as to be almost prohibitive. Rhodes' answer was to unload goods at the border, transship them to fast ox-wagons and send them up to Johannesburg. A clever reply. Kruger, now losing his political temper and balance, ordered the drifts to be closed against the wagons. But Rhodes, cool and col-



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

lected, appealed through the High Commissioner to Chamberlain, and Kruger was forced to open the drifts again.

The battle between Rhodes and Kruger, between Dutch and English, had begun.

Now, the mining population of the Rand—that is to say, the town of Johannesburg—had made the surprising discovery that the Reef of gold-bearing rock did not peter out. They had been more or less sure up till then that the band of banket would fade out at any minute, and consequently, apart from grouching every now and then to show that they were still English, they had not bothered to entrench themselves. But during the last year or two the leading mine companies had been importing American engineers to the Rand, and, with their usual pep and energy, these men had been nosing about the Rand with the unprecedented idea of finding out the exact potentialities of the Reef.

They had sunk boreholes, taken samples, and worked out intricate problems with the use of "X." The result was that they found that the Reef, instead of pinching out, went on dipping down into the earth indefinitely—even down to a depth of two or maybe three thousand feet. The effect of such pronouncements was to impregnate Johannesburg with ideas of stability. The mining population began to realize that they might have to live in the South African Republic for some time, and they began seriously to consider "their rights."

These rights, at the moment, amounted to no more than the right to make money out of the goldfields. But this was not enough for the sons of Great Britain, nor, they whispered persuasively, was it enough for the sons of Lithuania, Russia, Austria and Jerusalem. Now that the railways had been built, they had to think up something else quickly, so they thought up representation. The heterogeneous people of Johannesburg, led by a few far-flung Englishmen, demanded to be represented in the government of the country. This, on the face of it, seems very stupid. Why ever they wanted to start getting tied up in the knots of the People's Parliament of Pretoria, when they had enough to keep them busy making money on the Rand, is obscure. But such is

## THE PEOPLE

the conscience and morale of empire-builders that they do not want to keep their fingers out of any pie, no matter how sour and acid the plums in that pie may be. They always believe, of course, that they can put in some sugar and cook the dish themselves to perfection.

Johannesburg said it wanted immediate representation. The position at the time was that, after fourteen years' qualification, the full franchise was extended to the people; but Johannesburg did not regard this as representation. It also said it wanted a reduction in taxation. This last was a plausible demand; for the mining industry was paying four-fifths of the revenue of the State, and it was being hampered in the development of the less rich reefs by this heavy burden. To keep the ball rolling it also said it wanted the withdrawal of the dynamite concession.

Kruger's reply to these demands was made to his Boer supporters on the veranda of his house in Pretoria. Immediate representation, he pointed out, between puffs on his long pipe, would mean giving the country away as a present to the foreigners. They could qualify as citizens of the State after fourteen years. That meant that many of them would have representation in the year 1900. But no, this was not enough for them. They wanted it at once. Then the hordes of foreigners would outvote, and displace, the rightful owners of the country. They wanted everything. They wanted to swamp the Dutch. That must be made impossible. Reduction in taxation meant a heavy loss to the State revenue, and a consequent shrinkage in the activities of the Republic. This shrinkage would be felt very considerably by the farmers. Besides, the goldfields of the Witwatersrand did not belong to the foreigners; they belonged to the country, and the people of the country. They were laid down by Nature, not especially for the English or the Scotch, but for the people of the Republic. It was true that the mines were being worked by one section, but they must, in all reasonable judgment, pay for all sections. So there could be no reduction in taxation.

As for the dynamite concession—well, this, as his friends knew, had proved very profitable to them.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

But Johannesburg had begun to talk itself into a combative mood. The more its grievances were handed round from one to another of the people, the larger became the proportions of their complaints. The Rand grew determined not to be swamped by Kruger and his Dutchmen. Kruger stood firmly declared not to be swamped by the foreigners. And so the rift grew, and what had begun as an argument rapidly developed into a spiteful row, and culminated in a fight.

In 1892 a body of men, including many leaders of the mining industry, formed an organization known as the Transvaal National Union. These men banded together in the belief that conditions of life were becoming intolerable for them, and with the vague intention that something should be done by Johannesburg to bring about the reforms they wanted. They did nothing for some considerable time except anger each other with inflammatory talk directed against Kruger and the Dutch of the country.

It was about two years later that three men sat talking over a campfire in Rhodesia. One of these men was John Hays Hammond, an American mining engineer. The second was Doctor Leander Starr Jameson. The third was Cecil Rhodes. They were talking about the Rand. Rhodes knew a little about Johannesburg, for he was Managing Director of the Goldfields of South Africa, one of the leading mining companies on the Reef. But his attentions were rarely given to the Rand, for he was too fully absorbed by his activities in the Cape and Rhodesia. So Hammond was telling him about the mining industry and the people of Johannesburg. He told Rhodes that it was impossible for the economic conditions of the Rand to continue as they were. The poorer reefs, he said, would not pay because of the heavy taxation.

Rhodes and Jameson were interested, and on leaving Rhodesia they went down to Johannesburg to discover for themselves the true position. They found the settlement enveloped in resentment and suppressed fury. A sullen hatred of Kruger had grown up in the dusty streets of this mining town, and all his measures, all the resolutions passed by Government, were now regarded as direct insults to the Rand.

## THE PEOPLE

Led by the most prominent men in the town, the people of Johannesburg were being treated to a particularized form of jingoism, for which South Africa should long since have become noted. The talk centered a great deal on the glory of the Union Jack, the magnificent deeds of the father and grandfather of everyone present, the wonderful heritage that had been specially left to the speaker and his audience, the necessity for them to uphold the honor of Great Britain, and the need for them to show the fatherland that they were worthy sons of their own glorious soil. These speeches, delivered nightly at eight-thirty, usually ended in a passionate and throbbing crescendo of alleged patriotism and, had any doubts existed in the manly breasts of the gathering, these were banished by *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the Queen*, which lusty finale was calculated to bring any hesitating Czech or backward Pole rushing into the folds of the Union Jack. Community singing has much to answer for in the shaping of the world.

The people of the Rand successfully worked themselves into a fever of loyalty and affection which would undoubtedly have embarrassed Great Britain very much had she known. In the eyes of Johannesburg nothing was too good for England, no deed was too splendid to commit in her name. But they were not going to be stopped from committing splendid deeds by this modesty, so when Rhodes arrived they were talking about an armed uprising against the Dutch.

Rhodes found that the most influential members of the mining industry had joined in the angry movement and were leading the way—Alfred Beit, Lionel Phillips, Abe Bailey, George Farrar, supported and surrounded by a host of less influential but more emphatic reactionaries.

Rhodes went away to attend to his duties as Prime Minister of the Cape and Chairman of the Chartered Company of Rhodesia. But he came back with the suggestion that there must be an armed force on the border, not to stimulate a rising, but to be in readiness in case Johannesburg should need support. And the talk of revolution, which came at first so haltingly from the lips of Johannesburg, was now spat out vindictively.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

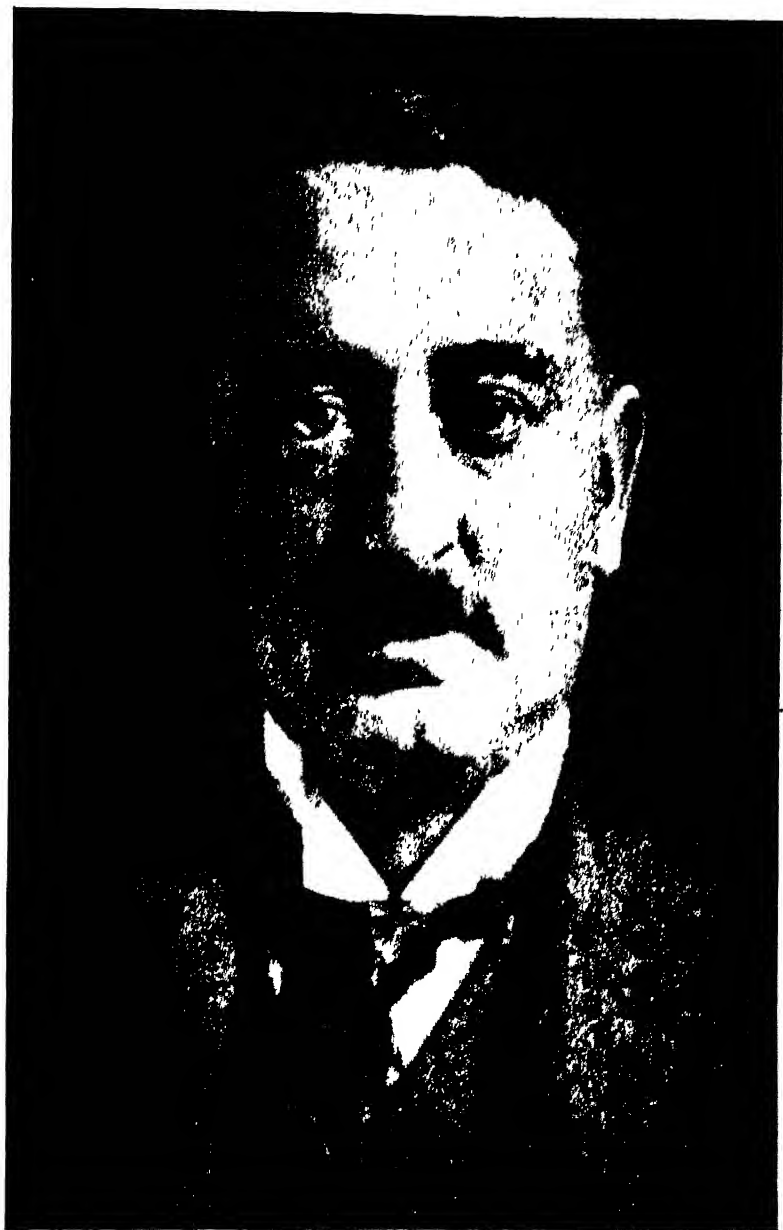
As a last chance to Kruger, the Rand sent a monster petition bearing 32,479 signatures, demanding extended franchise. Of all their grievances, they chose this, the least genuine, to act as an ultimatum for them. And in Pretoria, Kruger was faced with the reality of his forebodings. He was not lacking in either courage or conviction as he stood before the People's Parliament to oppose the petition. He attacked it with every nerve in his body. He would not and could not give in. He would not forfeit his beloved country. Passionately, and with a strangely inspired eloquence, Kruger urged the rejection of the petition—and it was rejected.

In Johannesburg the Reform Committee planned to get their way. The plot which commended itself to these tin captains of colonial commerce and industry as a splendid and foolproof gesture of defiance, is worn down by the passage of years to appear now as a wretched and unhappy affair. The scheme solemnly decided upon by the Reform Committee was that the revolutionaries should seize the town of Johannesburg, which would not be difficult, as all Johannesburg was revolutionary, and then, having declared themselves the provisional government of the country, they were to raid and capture the fort of Pretoria, which they believed contained an arsenal with some ten thousand rifles. After this they were a little vague as to what they were going to do, but it would be something like appealing to the world to uphold them in their demands for extended franchise.

The Reform Committee knew perfectly well that the Dutch of the Republic would resist the rising, and this was where Doctor Jameson would ride in from the border with a force of armed men. It was arranged that Jameson would not attack until he received the word from Johannesburg. And in the meantime the Reform Committee prepared the town for the rising by smuggling arms on to the Rand. Meanwhile Kruger discussed the rumors of such a rising with his burghers and said:

"Wait until the time comes. Take a tortoise; if you want to kill it you must wait until it puts its head out, and then you cut it off."

But the collusion between Jameson and the Reform Committee



From The World's Work.

The late Cecil John Rhodes.



## THE PEOPLE

did not synchronize. Late in the evening of December 29, 1895, while the mining magnates were drinking whiskies and talking of their scheme to overthrow Kruger, Doctor Jameson started off from Pitsani with a body of mounted men to descend upon the peaceful town of Johannesburg.

Seventy miles on, Jameson received a note from the Dutch Commandant-General of the Republic demanding to know the reason of the advance, and ordering him to return immediately. Jameson replied that his reasons were not hostile, but that he was riding to assist the principal residents of the Rand "in their demand for justice and the ordinary rights of every citizen of a civilized State." Two days later, as the force rode steadily nearer Johannesburg, Jameson received another message, this time from the Agent of the British Government.

"Her Majesty's Government," it said, "entirely disapprove your conduct in invading Transvaal with armed force; your action has been repudiated—you are ordered to retire at once from the country, and will be held personally responsible for the consequences of your unauthorised and most improper proceeding."

But Jameson and his men rode on through the flat unbroken country. His men were tired and weary. They had not eaten for twenty-four hours, and any illusion they may have held about being unopposed was dispelled when they found that a force of burghers was dogging their footsteps through the dry parched veldt. Jameson, at first proud and defiant, was now hoping that reinforcements from Johannesburg would come to meet him. But with each step forward his optimism grew fainter. Once, in the failing light, Sir John Willoughby, his henchman, caught sight of a large body of moving men, and concluding that these, at last, were the reinforcements from Johannesburg, he dashed forward at a canter to greet his colleagues. The spitting fire of guns did not cease as he rode toward them. The army was a force of Dutch burghers. Ten miles out of Johannesburg, Jameson and his men climbed a rise, and rode wearily forward. They rode right



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

into a trap laid for them by the waiting Boers. On all sides the rocks and boulders of the country were covered with the Maxims and rifles of the burghers. The Dutchmen, who had up till now held their fire save for occasional sniping on the rear, subjected the raiders to a heavy fusillade.

As night fell the attack dwindled to intermittent firing, and next morning, in the light of dawn, Jameson and his men discovered that the boulders were alive with Dutch guns. Both advance and retreat were blocked, and they were in a circle of enemy fire. The help from Johannesburg did not come. The burghers began a strong attack, and Jameson saw the position was hopeless. With little resistance he surrendered. It was the end of the Jameson Raid. The revolt in Johannesburg had never even started. All that Jameson had succeeded in doing was to surprise his colleagues on the Reform Committee, anger the Dutch, and push the sympathies of the world toward Kruger.

Kruger was not such a fool as the English thought him. He made good use of this sympathy, and took care that neither he nor his followers should do anything at this juncture which might undermine the sentimental feelings of the world toward the innocently attacked Republicans. He went one further. He piled on the sob-stuff, and then adopted the rôle of magnanimous martyr. He was playing a desperate game now, with his country as the stakes. Jameson and his leaders were arrested and sent to jail in Pretoria. Later they were handed over to the Imperial authorities, and were sent to England to stand trial. Jameson was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment, Willoughby to ten, Robert White to seven, and the other three to five months each.

The Dutch of the Transvaal were more interested, however, in the fate of the Reform Committee. It was these men, after all, who, living in their country, taking the gold out of their earth, had plotted treason in their midst. The night before the mining magnates, the lawyers, and the doctors of Johannesburg were arrested, Kruger issued an unusually naïve proclamation. It was addressed to the inhabitants of the Rand, but was meant for the ears of the world.

## THE PEOPLE

"I, Stephanus Paulus Kruger, State-President of the South African Republic, with the advice and consent of the Executive Council, make known to all the inhabitants of Johannesburg and adjoining vicinities, that I am unutterably thankful to God that, through the courage and bravery of my burghers, the contemptible and treacherous raid in my country was repulsed and the independence of the Republic saved.

"The persons guilty of this crime must naturally be punished according to law; that is, prosecuted before the High Court and a jury. But there are thousands that have been misled, and I am sure that even amongst the so-called leaders of the movement there are many who have been deceived. A small minority of shrewd men in the country and outside have incited the unhappy inhabitants of Johannesburg under the false pretence of fighting for political rights. Day after day they were goaded, and when, in their insanity, they thought that the moment had come, Dr. Jameson was sent over the borders of the Republic. Did they ever ask themselves what would happen to you?

"I shiver when I come to think what massacre could have been caused if a lenient Providence had not saved you and my burghers.

"I do not speak of the damage caused financially.

"I now turn to you in full confidence; strengthen the hands of the Government, and work in co-operation with it to make this Republic a country where all nationalities can live like brothers together.

"For months and months I have been contriving to find those alterations and improvements which would be deemed desirable in the State Government. But the abominable incitement of the public, aided and magnified by the Press, has kept me back. The same men that appeared as leaders of the people ask me for improvements in a tone and in a manner which they in their own native country would not have dared to use. Thus it was made impossible for me and my burghers, the founders of the Republic, to take these uncouth proposals into consideration.

"It was my intention to propose a resolution to the first session of the Volksraad, that a Town Council and Mayor be

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

appointed to manage the affairs of your city. According to all constitutional principles, such a Town Council would be elected by the direct vote of all the inhabitants of the town.

"I ask you earnestly to lay your hand on your heart and answer this question: Can I and may I, after what has happened, propose this to Parliament? My answer is that I know there are thousands of people in Johannesburg to whom I can give this vote with confidence. Inhabitants of Johannesburg, make it possible for the Council to go to the People's Parliament with the motto 'Forget and forgive.'

"God save the land and people."

The next day the Reform Committee was arrested, and Abe Bailey, Solly Joel, Lionel Phillips, George Farrar, John Hays Hammond, and the rest of the wealthy and influential men in the movement were sent to jail. They were tried in the High Court at Pretoria, and the ringleaders, Phillips, Frank Rhodes, who was, incidentally, Cecil Rhodes' brother, Farrar and Hays Hammond were sentenced to death. The other fifty-nine accused were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of two thousand pounds each. Kruger was going to make a profit on his martyrdom. The very next day it was announced that the death sentence would be commuted, while a later proclamation declared that all the prisoners would be set free on the payment of their original fines. The price of liberty for the four ringleaders was a fine of twenty-five thousand pounds each. Woolls-Sampson and Karri-Davies resolutely refused to pay, and were kept in prison until Kruger grew tired of them and Queen Victoria had a Diamond Jubilee. Then they were released.

Curiously enough, the Jameson Raid taught no one a lesson. Kruger continued to wallow in his policy of self-protection from the foreigners. The dynamite concession, heavy taxation and the question of enfranchisement were left untouched. While in Johannesburg the people, unabashed by the dreadful mistake they had made, proceeded with the work of mining gold, and in their spare time continued to excite one another about their rights.

Not an unusual story for the Colonies. One which was to end in the usual way.

#### CHAPTER IV

### BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

WHEN, IN 1886, THE RUMOR FIRST REACHED KIMBERLEY THAT GOLD had been discovered on the Witwatersrand, one of the people most interested was a little Jew known as Barney Barnato. This was not his real name.

Thirteen years before the Rand was found, young Barnett Isaacs, second son of a general dealer in Aldgate, set sail from Southampton to join his brother Henry on the diamond fields of South Africa.

Henry Isaacs was managing to eke out a living as a dealer in Kimberley, and young Barnett, equipped with no other qualification but that of being an amateur conjurer and entertainer, decided that it would be far easier to amuse the diggers of Griqualand West than to convince the public of Aldgate, and probably more profitable. So he set out on the great adventure. On board the *Anglian*, young Isaacs flung away the last threads of amateurism, and entered the world of professionals by changing his name and preparing to accept any money offered him. He landed at Cape-town with the new name of Barnett Barnato, but very little else.

The wagon journey to the diamond fields lasted nearly two months, and Barney's accommodation consisted of permission to walk alongside the wagon when it moved, and to sleep under it when it stopped. Kimberley, a settlement of dirty little tin shanties, flies and fever, did not appreciate the Arts, for the slim young man with the sense of humor and the accent which stamped him indelibly as a follower of Moses met with dismal failure as a public entertainer. The diggers and dealers had only one thing in common with the Royal Queen of England: they were not amused.

Barney was driven to find some other way of earning money,

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

so he joined forces with his friend Lou Cohen, and together the two men struggled desperately to gain a foothold in the diamond world. They slept in a dirty little iron hut; they lived almost entirely on mealie porridge, and for a year the back streets of a distant Whitechapel seemed luxury to them.

Then Henry Isaacs joined forces with his brother Barney, and a wooden sign bearing the name of "Barnato Brothers" was nailed up on the tin wall of the hut. For six years the brothers worked ceaselessly to build up a credit balance for themselves. They began to realize that here in this insanitary village of diamond-seekers nothing mattered except money—money was the key that would open any door. Without it, the finest man was worthless; with money, the most worthless man was a person of some account, and a person to warrant attention and even respect.

They set themselves the task of building a mountain of pounds, to stand as a landmark of their power and force. Barney Barnato learned, very early in his experience, that his national shrewdness would have to be exercised tirelessly to keep him abreast of the diamond dealers. It would have to be supplemented very materially if it were to pull him into the lead.

Conjuring tricks of his music-hall days could, he found, be successfully employed not on the boards, but on the diggings; not with rabbits and colored handkerchiefs, but with credits and debits, with pounds and shillings. For six years, then, he worked day and night. He would spend all the hours of the day nosing about among claims, dashing in and out of dark little offices in the settlement, making a deal here, and clinching a bargain there. At night he made a systematic tour of every bar, dance-hall and gambling hell in Kimberley, to talk and drink with the diggers and dealers, and to listen to the latest business gossip of the fields. Soon he had accumulated three thousand pounds, and with this money he bought his first claim in the Kimberley mine, and began the business of diamond mining for himself, instead of merely dealing.

After establishing the firm of Barnato Brothers in London as diamond dealers and financiers, Barney floated his claims in the

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

Kimberley mine into his first company, the Barnato Diamond-Mining Company. This was the beginning of his success, a financial success of phenomenal proportions, which resulted in the amalgamation of his diamond interests with those of Cecil Rhodes into De Beers Consolidated Mines.

The young Barnato was, by this time, a millionaire, the first millionaire made in South Africa. His successes in the money market did not, strangely enough, go to his head at first. He was still the little Jew from Aldgate, and was proud of it. His less fortunate companions on the diggings hinted darkly that Barney conjured diamonds into ground which never held diamonds before. They talked with knowing emphasis of the power of money, and suggested, less emphatically and with more caution, that nefarious dealings were afoot on the Kimberley mine. Sometimes the three letters of accusation could be heard above the whisper of the billiard-room gossip, the three letters which summed up cryptically the condemnation of the fields—I.D.B., Illicit Diamond-Buying. Not that Barney's critics were righteous men, for there was little place for righteousness in Kimberley in those days. They were merely jealous, and, like all envious people, they sought to counteract their pique with a spite and malice which they eventually grew to believe were well-founded. Barney went his way unconcerned, good-humored and friendly. His energy increased in ratio to his bank balance. His mountain of pounds grew high. He sweat as he shoveled for more money to add to the pile.

When the news of the Rand strike first reached Kimberley, Barney was interested in an inactive way. He did not believe that the goldfields of the Witwatersrand would last, and, secure in his own judgment, he sat apart, watching with interest his colleagues chase off in ox-wagons after a golden mirage. His judgment in business matters had never failed him, and he was quite content now to be guided by his instincts, and to leave the Rand alone.

Kimberley was kept well posted with news from the Rand, for a system of dispatch-riding had been inaugurated to fill the gap of telegraphic communication. Adventurous young men with

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

fast horses were employed to carry dispatches over the border of the two States between Otto's Hoop and Mafeking. It was important to the big financial houses of Kimberley to learn the developments on the Rand as soon as possible, in order that they might have the option of investing money, buying properties, and controlling markets, if they so desired. Each house in Kimberley employed its own riders, and spared no expense in this organization of human telegraph poles. The result was that the twenty miles which separated Mafeking from Otto's Hoop was transformed into a vast stadium of competitive relay racers. Each mile was posted with fresh horses, and the riders, on receiving their messages, would charge off across the uneven stony veldt, to vault from one horse to another in full gallop, and race neck and neck against their rivals toward the finishing post of one or the other town. Four times a day the race was run to carry the news from the Rand to Kimberley.

The reports from the goldfields, instead of indicating a lingering death, as Barney had predicted, grew more and more glowing, until in 1887 he wondered whether he could possibly have made a wrong diagnosis. Barnato was not the sort of man to allow pride to interfere with business. He decided that any doubt about the potentialities of the Witwatersrand must be settled at once, and so he engaged the services of two of the leading mining experts in Kimberley, and set off to inspect the goldfields of the Transvaal.

It was just as he thought.

His engineers reported that the Reef was no more than the elevated bed of an old water-course, and that the auriferous rock could not extend to any depth. They advised Barnato to have nothing to do with the Rand. The geological formation of the Reef was something quite new to the mining world, and Barney had no means of judging the value of the deposit for himself. But he had the greatest faith in his engineers, and he returned to Kimberley quite satisfied to be out of a bad proposition. He was content and happy to let men like J. B. Robinson, Wernher, Beit and Eckstein burn their fingers on the Witwatersrand if they knew

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

no better; but he, Barnato the millionaire, did not intend to lose a single grain from that mountain of money which he had built up so laboriously.

The reports from Johannesburg grew more and more excited. The dispatch riders on the border raced each other furiously to Otto's Hoop. The Rand lived on, growing fat and strong. Barney's satisfaction turned at first to surprise, then to anxiety, and a fear that he had made a mistake, and then to a firm and resolute policy of action. He set off again for Johannesburg. This time he went alone. For a week he scoured the ridge from early morning till late at night. He examined properties, questioned miners and engineers, inspected development, peered over samples, and followed the lie of the Reef inch by inch. At the end of the week he had decided to buy up every mine and every business venture on the Rand.

He had decided to become the master of Johannesburg, to own it, control it, and shape it to his will. He would buy out everybody and everything that stood in his way. He was determined to be the sole proprietor of this long stretch of gold-bearing country. He set to work acquiring properties, and he moved with a lightning speed. Now that he was decided in his course of action, this little, short-sighted man of thirty-seven years was as courageous and strong as a businesslike lion. He had no time to juggle and maneuver himself into an advantageous position. He had to attack with force—with the force of his money. By the end of the year he had bought up a huge stretch of claim ground holding reefs of proved value. He had already planned the shape that the town of Johannesburg must take to suit his own convenience, and he bought up every property and building site he could lay his hands on. He prepared schemes for the construction of a Stock Exchange and an impressive building to house the firm of Barnato Brothers. He planned a central market and a garden suburb, and he fixed the business center of the town near Barnato Buildings. He thought about hospitals and waterworks, and he prepared a draft scheme of the limited companies who were to buy all the various undertakings from him and manage them. He trusted no one to



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

carry through any business on his behalf. He attended to every deal himself. He worked day and night to buy out Johannesburg. But with all his wealth, Barney had not enough money to "corner" the Witwatersrand. He succeeded in realizing only half his ambition. He became part master of the Rand, but at least he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was the largest individual holder of mining claims and real estate in the country.

Probably, if Barnato had gone to the Rand a few months earlier, his money would have gone further and bought more. As it was, though, he arrived in a boom period when prices were high. Booms in Johannesburg were, and are today, as unreliable and as unstable as the favorite in the Derby. The slightest optimism, based on no good reason at all, would send prices soaring. The smallest headache would send them slumping. If an operator had had a good lunch and felt breezy and cheerful, the market would rise. There would be a boom. If the operator had had a bad lunch and felt liverish, prices would drop and there would be a slump. When the industry was faced with real difficulties such as it was confronted with before the introduction of the Mac-Arthur-Forrest process, then the consequent and natural reaction of the market became not a slump, but a crisis.

Today in Johannesburg the Stock Market is as sensitive as a nicely brought-up maiden on her wedding night. A fraud charge in the local law courts, the inability of the Government to work out a legible formula for mining taxation, Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, and Chamberlain in England will make the market tremble and vibrate with uncertainty. An operator who has had a good lunch and feels cheerful and optimistic can still work wonders on the Stock Exchange. If, like Barney Barnato, he has a pronounced *flair* for manipulating the market, and is not handicapped with scruples, he can even beat Mussolini to it, and send the market bounding high. The booms and slumps continue, of course, but today in Johannesburg, when there is not a boom in progress, the position is immediately regarded as a slump. There appears to be no such state as normality on the Rand.

Barnato's heavy purchases in Johannesburg and along the Reef

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

in 1888 led the industry to believe that the diamond king from Kimberley knew something which they did not know. They thought Barnato had something up his sleeve, that he was buying with a purpose, that he was "in on the ground floor," as they put it. When he had spent two million pounds in two months on properties of one sort and another, they were certain that he had some very special information about the Reef, and they followed him blindly and bought heavily. Naturally, the boom was stimulated, and, more naturally still, the boom was followed by a slump. This was just about the time that Kruger was being harassed by demands from Johannesburg for railways, and was stubbornly refusing to give in. The slump continued. But when a few months later the mines were confronted with the problem of how to obtain free gold from the pyritical ore, the slump immediately became a crisis. The Rand became panic-stricken, and prices dropped with a clatter as nervous, discouraged men sold out their interests and left the town. Barnato had been caught both ways. He had bought either too late or too early. But he did not mind. He moved about the frightened town with a strange cheerfulness. He built his Barnato Buildings. He built his Stock Exchange and his Market Hall. He laid out his suburbs into streets and plots ready for purchasers. Prices continued to fall about his ears. But Barney was confident and optimistic. He tried to instill this confidence into the population of the town. He gave his reasons for his belief in the security of the Rand when his wife laid the foundation stone of Barnato Buildings.

"I tell you here and now," he said, "that I have never made any mistake in speculation or in the investment of money in my life."

He hadn't made a mistake this time, either, for when the crisis came to an end, the money from his mines and his suburbs and his market rolled in a rich stream into his banking account.

Barney Barnato, unlike his successors, never pretended that he was anything else but a humble, illiterate Jew from the backwash of London. At the height of his success he remained a simple little man, with a good heart, a quick smile and a conscience that was not easily bruised. He would wander round the streets of Johan-

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

nesburg, in shabby, ill-fitting clothes that made him appear more like a traveling peddler than the first millionaire on the Rand.

On every street corner he would stop to talk to some friend or another about business. He was "Barney" to everyone. In his office he was cold and dangerous. Outside in the street or in the bars he was generous and warm-hearted, when he had the money. This was seldom. The little millionaire was in the habit of forgetting to carry any money about with him. It was not just a convenient sort of trick: it was a genuine carelessness. He would meet a friend on the pavement corner, pat him on the shoulder and take him off to have a drink. And when the barmaid announced the bill, Barney would put his hand in his pocket, bring it out empty, and apologetically ask his friend to settle the account. Time and time again this would happen. Barney never seemed to have a shilling to jingle with a penny in his pocket.

Of course, he always promised to refund these small amounts, but he always forgot, and in the end his co-drinkers grew wise. They flatly refused to lend him a few shillings, but they willingly offered him ten or twenty pounds instead. They knew he would remember to repay any substantial sum of money, but they closed his credit account for small amounts. So Barney Barnato wandered round the town which he almost owned, a beggar for shillings, a millionaire for pounds. There are men in Johannesburg today who will tell you that they once lent Barnato a pound and never got it back. They don't seem to know whether to be glad or sorry about it, either.

At night, when the thick dark sky enveloped the town in a heavy blackness, when men wandered about the streets with lanterns to guide them, Barney Barnato could be found entertaining the diggers and the tradesmen in the local music-hall, where the air was thick with smoke and the dissolute smell of whisky that had been swallowed, and where the prostitutes of the town paraded in single file like mannequins before attaching themselves to an audience which had always left its wife respectably at home. Barney had made professional progress since his conjuring days in Kimberley. Then, as an insignificant dealer, he had merely

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

sung topical songs and peppered his act with a few tricks. Now, as a financial magnate, he had plunged himself into the realms of higher art, by playing melodrama. Matthias, in *The Bells*, was his favorite part, and the audience loved it. They encouraged him with loud cheers, vibrant criticism, and comments of the most topical nature, as Matthias strutted the boards with his face decorated by the stuffing of a discarded mattress which was meant to represent a beard. Barney took his acting seriously, though, and when at last he cast himself for Othello, he expected the audience to take him seriously too.

The house was full, the air was rancid, and the women settled themselves down on the hard chairs to an evening of complete discomfort the night that Barney Barnato played the Moor. There was silence when the little Jew appeared with his face smeared in soot. But when he began to declaim the lines of Shakespeare in his Cockney-cum-Hebrew accent, it was too much for Benny Hart, who was sitting in the front row. He laughed out loud.

Othello stopped in his eloquence.

Then the Moor strode to the edge of the stage, and glared fiercely at the offender.

"Benny Hart! Benny Hart! You just wait till I get through with this," he said. "I'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouth."

There was silence for the rest of the show. Benny Hart did not wait.

In the center of the growing town of Johannesburg, the firm of Barnato Brothers continued to prosper. Barney's boast that he had never made a false speculation was strictly accurate up till then. Everything he did at this time was right for him. Every enterprise he touched made money. He employed his natural cunning as a manipulator on the Stock Exchange, and he became such an important operator that every scheme and every venture on the market had, of necessity, to take Barnato into consideration.

The force of his money made him an invaluable ally, and a disastrous enemy to other operators. If he so desired, he could build up any venture into a firm success; if it suited him, he could

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

crash any scheme, no matter how good it was, with the sheer weight of his resources. The result was that he had to be consulted and let in on every new deal before it could be floated, and he made more money sitting quietly in his office, building up or breaking the plans of other operators, than he ever made on the diamond fields of Kimberley. The Stock Exchange he had built was molded by his deft fingers to any shape he fancied. The power of the house of Barnato seemed fathomless.

Barney worked day and night with an unhealthy energy. No proposition was too small for him to consider; no scheme was too big for him to tackle. All was fish that came to his net as long as they could be turned into goldfish. And no man could cheat him. Barney had lived long enough on the diamond diggings and the goldfields to know all about crooked deals and underhand business, and anyone who tried such tricks on the little man soon found that they had made an uncomfortable mistake.

He had always made it an unbreakable rule to attend to the important side of his business himself, but at last he found that even his unusual energy was exhaustible. When he reached the point where he could no longer hold the reins himself, he sent to England for his two young nephews to join him. They were the sons of his sister, and he was devoted to them both. The brothers were Woolf and Solly Joel. The two young men arrived on the Rand and were immediately introduced into the firm of Barnato Brothers. They made apt pupils, and in a short while they had borrowed enough of their uncle's skill to be made directors of this important financial house.

In the meantime, Barney was engaging in a friendly battle with Paul Kruger. Like his rival, J. B. Robinson, he had decided early in his Rand career that it would be more profitable to be a friend of Kruger than an enemy, and so, like the Snark-hunters, he set out to charm the old man "with smiles and soap." Curiously enough, Kruger liked the little financier. He liked Barney's direct, businesslike manner. He respected his shrewdness, he admired his ability; but, above all, the President appreciated the fact that Barney was not a critic and a hater of the Dutch people and the

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

Republic. He was not always grouching and nagging and complaining. And so the two men—the big grim Boer and the little foreign financier—spent many an hour on the veranda of the low white house in Pretoria. Barnato was genuinely sympathetic toward the Dutch people of the country. He had a sneaking admiration for the President in his attitude over the dynamite concession, because, he argued, if Kruger was clever enough to extort money out of the mining population, he deserved to make a profit.

He was not personally interested in the franchise question, because this was not a matter involving money, and although he was proud of having been born in England, Barnato understood and upheld Kruger's attitude over the franchise.

"The Transvaal Government," he said, "is like no other government in the world. It is, indeed, not a government at all, but an unlimited company of some twenty thousand shareholders, which has been formed to exploit a large territory, and after being unable for thirty years to pay any dividend, or even to pay its clerks, suddenly struck it rich. There was neither capital nor skill in the company itself for development, and so it leased the ground to those who had both. They had a hard time in the early years, and Kruger thinks they are entitled to all they can get now. That is all right, and quite in my line. If I had a company going on all right, and shareholders satisfied, do you suppose I would do anything that would bring in a lot of fresh shareholders?"

That, then, was his attitude over the matter of representation in Johannesburg in the government of the country. But he was less sympathetic when it came to the question of railway communication, because here was an issue that affected him financially, and nothing must be allowed to interfere with the profits of Barnato Brothers. So he spent more time than he liked to afford in dashing over to Pretoria by coach to argue with Kruger. When at last the President succumbed to the overwhelming forces round him, when at last the railway line was built from Delagoa Bay, Barney Barnato believed that this came as the result of his influence with the President. Now, for the first time, he began to think that his

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

money could buy any man in the world, and could yield any desired effect.

Money was power.

Money could move mountains and work miracles. And the more he imbibed this doctrine, the more jealous he became of his wealth, the more fearful he grew of losing his grip, the harder he worked to build up his mountain of pounds.

After the Delagoa Bay line had been formally opened, Barney did not stop visiting Kruger. He went now to argue that the rates should be reduced, for he was still put to some financial discomfort by Kruger's tariffs. But before he could test out his power with the President, the Jameson Raid had occurred. Barnato had been careful not to become involved in any way with the Reform Committee. He was one of the few men in Johannesburg who did not reveal any sympathy toward the "Reformers," nor did he join their movement.

But the after-effects of the Raid brought Barney storming and swearing with indignation to Kruger's house. His nephew Solly had been arrested. At first Barney was tranquilly resigned to his nephew's arrest. It was not, he thought, of any great importance, for the Reform Committee would be charged with treason to the Republic, and this charge, under the Gold Law, was a petty offense. It almost served Solly right for being such a naughty boy. Barney did not worry any further. But the night before the trial the whole Committee of Reformers pleaded guilty, and this greatly angered Barney, who declared that they had played right into the hands of the prosecutors. The prisoners were duly tried, not under the Gold Law, but with the rusty machinery of the Roman Dutch Law, and Solly Joel was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

It was then that Barney Barnato went mad with fury. He started in the courtroom by shouting abuse at the judge. Outside he yelled his opinion of the judge, of Kruger, of the law, to an appreciative crowd, and then he dashed off to Pretoria to swear and shout his defiance in Kruger's face.

His nephew, the nephew of Barney Barnato, had been sent to

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

jail for two years. He addressed Kruger in every term of abuse he had ever heard, and there was a fine selection. He called the President by every name except Your Honor. He swore and shouted and shook his fists. And then he told Kruger what he intended to do. If, he threatened, if the sentences on the Reform Committee were not commuted, if all the prisoners were not released within a fortnight, he, Barney Barnato, would close down every one of his mines, and would throw out of work more white men than the Republic had burghers.

But Kruger, the lion tamer, was not easily frightened by a little foreigner. He seemed unimpressed by Barney's threats. One good punch on the jaw would have sent the man from Johannesburg flying. But Kruger did nothing except look surprised and dignified. He had little opportunity of speaking because Barney hardly paused for breath. He meant to teach Kruger a lesson. He meant to demonstrate his power to the whole Republic.

The next morning, to show he was in earnest, he gave every one of his many thousand employees a fortnight's notice, and he suspended all work. Just before the fortnight was up, Barnato went back to see Kruger.

The President had already decided to make use of the sympathy of the European world, and had determined to play the rôle of the oppressed, ill-treated martyr. He had already made up his mind that it would be a splendid and noble gesture to commute the sentences imposed upon the Reform Committee. He was neither impressed nor influenced by Barnato's threats, but when Barney went to see him a second time, Kruger thought it advisable to let the financier think what he wished. He suggested that Barnato should extend the notice to his employees for another fortnight. Before this period had expired all the prisoners, except the two conscientious objectors, had been released.

It is interesting to speculate on the action Barnato would have taken had Kruger called his bluff. Barnato was deadly serious when he warned the President that he would shut down every concern bearing his name, but this warning was extended during the height of his temper. It would have been a living death to



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Barnato to put an end to his business, and thus kill the only interest he had in life. The time was not yet ripe for suicide.

On the liberation of the Reform Committee, Barney was more convinced than ever that he was the only man who could dictate terms to the President.

Money was power.

He could knock over any obstacle that stood in his way. He could command governments, and rule states. He was stronger than a king. He was a dangerous menace, an invaluable and unbeatable ally. He was power.

His money slowly began to eat its way into his heart and brain. He thought of nothing else but how to build up and fortify his golden strength. His body panted, his mind struggled to capture and hold more wealth.

And then gradually, almost imperceptibly, an indefinable change seemed to take place in his world. A few months after the Jameson Raid the market was threatened with a slump. For once, Barney could not understand why this should be. Large blocks of shares from some unknown quarter were thrown on to the market, and he could not discover where they came from. He could not find the hole to stop the leak. He tried to arrest the slump, and bought heavily to give a lead of confidence. But all his strength now seemed to have turned to water.

He lost three million pounds.

He had made a mistake in speculation. He had made a mistake in the investment of his money.

About this time there was a considerable interest among the Rand magnates in the newly discovered strike of gold on the Buffelsdorn Mine near Klerksdorp. A leading engineer had reported to one of the big houses that the Reef on this property was both wide and rich, that it was persistent, and that it would probably prove the existence of a new Rand. The engineer did not add, however, that the Buffelsdorn Reef was cut off underground by a great wedge of granite which threatened the life of the mine. He did not know about this dyke, nor did anyone else

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

except one or two men personally interested in the property. Barnato came to hear of the engineer's report on Buffelsdorn, and bid high against his competitors for the option. Those who knew about the dyke, those who realized that this great wall of granite had completely displaced the Reef, kept silent. Barney Barnato bought the control of Buffelsdorn Mine, and bought himself another mistake. He lost nearly a million pounds.

And now, his nerve gave way.

He grew frightened. He had lost his power to make money. Panic and terror seized him.

Barney Barnato was losing his grip.

He was losing his money.

He was losing his strength.

Losing—losing—losing——

He was losing his sense of balance. He became morbid and neurasthenic. At night he dreamed about money and woke in the dark in a cold sweat of agony. Then he was enveloped in a fog of delusion and delirium. He had lost all his money. He was absolutely penniless. He had nothing. All day, all night his mind was nagged and teased and tortured by the thought of money. His wife was worried. He showed every sign of a complete mental breakdown. He had been made gravely ill with fear and fancy.

His nephew Solly was due to sail for England. Barney suddenly announced one morning that he would accompany Solly. The calm detached atmosphere of the ship soothed the nervous little man. He regained much of his old cheerful self-confidence. After a day of gale and storm the sun broke in a cloudless sky as the *Scot* plowed her way toward England. Barney and his nephew were walking briskly up and down the deck after lunch. Barney had found his old energy once more. His quick, rapid steps tired the younger man, and after an hour Solly suggested that they should sit down. The deck was empty save for the sleeping figure of a ship's officer.

Barney asked Solly what the time was, in an eager excited voice.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

It was thirteen minutes past three. He jumped up from his chair.

He ran to the rails.

He plunged himself overboard.

Solly shrieked for help.

"Murder! murder!" he cried desperately.

When Clifford, the fourth officer, rushed to his side, he pointed to the figure in the water, and begged him to save his uncle. Without hesitating, Clifford threw off his coat and jumped into the swirling sea. At the warning, "Man overboard," the engines were stopped and the lifeboat was lowered. It reached the unconscious figure of Clifford first, and a few yards further on the motionless body of Barnato was picked up. Artificial respiration was tried for two hours, but with that plunge into the sea, Barnato the unbeatable had fallen forever.

Woolf Joel, and his brother Solly, were now the leading members of the firm of Barnato Brothers. Neither of them had the shrewd ability and business genius of their uncle, but neither of them was a fool. At least they had the good judgment to surround themselves with brilliant men. They employed the finest engineers, geologists, accountants and scientists that money could buy, and they followed the recommendations and observed the suggestions of their unobtrusive servants faithfully.

The house of Barnato prospered exceedingly. Woolf, the elder of the two brothers, was greatly liked in Johannesburg. He had all the kindness and generosity of Barney Barnato. He was simple and quiet, and carried with him an air of sincerity and genuineness which was as noticeable in that town of bluffers and opportunists as a road sign in the desert. Solly, on the other hand, had inherited his uncle's flamboyance and self-assurance. He had all the confidence of the gambler, and not a little of the aggressiveness of the wealthy man.

Not many months after Barnato's suicide, Solly received an anonymous letter. This was not an unusual event, but the letter itself, written in a decorative, foreign hand, was not conceived in the ordinary mold of threat and demand.



Photo by Elliott & Fry.

Barney Barnato.



## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

*"Solly B. Joel.*

"SIR—" it ran, "You and yours are now capitalists, *i.e.* modern brigands who safely plunder the public under the protection of public law. More fools the public to have such. Well, I also propose for once to be a brigand, but in defiance of the law, accepting the consequences willingly. It is the last resource of a desperate man whom ruin stares in the face, before seeking the only escape possible from utter misery by a bullet. Now, as I'm not the sort of mute character that gives up life without a last struggle for success, or, failing that, for revenge, I mean to play this last game with fate between yourself and me.

"As I have only my life left to stake in the game—and that not worth having, as matters are now—no doubt you'll hardly admit the game to be a fair one. But it's the only one open to me, in which I must win either a new start or—revenge; and anyhow it's only fair that you should not always hold all the trumps in a high-stakes game, as is your custom in business.

"This is how the game stands: I must have £12,000 at once or face ruin and disgrace, which I utterly decline to do. But if my race is run, so shall yours be! On the word of a man who has nothing to fear now from man—or devil. In a word, you shall find me the money that will save me, or come with me to explore 'Gehenna.' It's only poetic justice, anyhow.

"I give you credit for being a hard-headed business man. Now, don't you take me for a mere vulgar blackmailer who is trying to frighten you into giving him money, or perhaps a harmless madman; either would be a fatal mistake on your part. I am remarkably sane, I assure you, but in a desperate position, with enough decency left to infinitely prefer oblivion to existence as a disgraced pauper, and enough virility not to want to die like a hunted rat in a hole—alone and unavenged. Perhaps you can understand that—I think it is not very unnatural?

"Now, use your own judgment, as only you or your very nearest will have to bear the consequences. Advice is cheap and no one really cares for your safety but yourself, so only trust your own judgment.

"Even the Czar, or President, is at the mercy of a man who

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

is not a fool and is fearless of the consequences, and I must die anyhow if you won't help me, so what have I to fear?

"All the best police could do is to see your death avenged, never prevented, and that trouble I shall save them, as we shall die together. I'm not anxious to die, but I'm now ready for it, as the only decent way out of it all. So I'm not so very anxious about your decision, as long as I'm sure that you will have to share my own fate—and that I have made sure of, if here, or on train, steamer, London or elsewhere.

"And you will never know who I am till the moment I strike, so it's no use for you to bolt. It would only hasten the end. Now let fate take its course. I am plain with you, so that your death shall not be murder, but your own doing, really, though I will willingly take all the blame for removing you to a better world, this or the other side of the River Styx, where Barnato may be glad to see you again.

"Anyhow, you'll leave your money to console your friends here, while I only have debts. So you'll have, after all, the advantage over me. But I advise you to keep cool and consider well what you are going to do. Any false move cannot be undone, and must be fatal. 'Kismet,' says the Turk, and I, too. Let fate take its course.

"If you are fool enough to look to the police for help and protection in order to save your money for your heirs, in that case neither you nor I need to trouble any more about paltry cash—that's one last comfort. On the other hand, if you should understand your own interest, and my determination more thoroughly than I expect from my knowledge of you, you will be willing to comply with my demand, and lend me the money I need to recover my position. For I mean to repay, for the sake of my own satisfaction, not as an excuse now, only putting it as a loan.

"If it was possible to tell you now openly who I am, you would probably be convinced that every word I say here I mean to keep, even to the return of the sum demanded.

"If you decide to help me with your purse, put a 'personal' advertisement in the *Star* at once, heading it 'Kismet,' and I will tell you in another letter how I will arrange to receive the money needed. On my part I promise that you will never

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

again be asked by me for help, or troubled in any way, and that all shall be secret forever.

"And now, only one more warning. Don't try to be clever by making plans to trap me. Don't be persuaded to believe clever fools who risk nothing; but believe my word that nothing on earth can save you and me from the consequences of your own decision. On your own head now be whatever happens. Before I can be touched now, by the cleverest police or agent, you and I will care nought about it.

"Take your own counsel is all I can honestly say, and remember the moment I know that I am in danger you will have signed both our death warrants.

"Don't play now with our lives. Either act loyally in the manner I shall point out to you, or defy me by not taking note of my request to answer. You at least are then prepared to accept the most I can do, but in trying to escape through the hope of catching me by help of the police, you will only force on the worst result for you.

"KISMET."

Solly Joel did not care for this letter at all. It seemed to him to be the work of some foreign criminal, and he was uneasy. The character of the writing was Germanic, and the author was either serious in his threats or unbalanced in his mind. After reading the letter through carefully several times, Joel sent for a detective. Joel, Harold Strange, one of the directors of the firm, and the plain-clothes man sat in consultation over this strange letter, and it was decided that the first step to take was to lure the black-mailer out of his anonymity into the light of day.

The next issue of the *Star* obediently carried an advertisement in the Personal column:

"KISMET—why don't you call and act, and see me as a man?"

The same day Solly Joel received another letter written in the same flowery, friendly, blackmailing way—"Just to make no mistake that he really had received the first." And then a third, and a fourth letter came, all demanding twelve thousand pounds, and



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

all promising the consolation of a brotherhood in death. But still the blackmailer clung to his identity, and would not be persuaded to reveal himself. Joel put another advertisement in the *Star*:

“KISMET—I cannot correspond with an imaginary individual who has not the courage to state his grievance to me personally. I am willing to assist if I think it is necessary, but have no intention of being spoofed.”

Then Kismet became more brotherly than ever:

“I like the spirit of your last answer. It’s manly and natural from your point of view,” he said kindly. And then he went on mysteriously to say, “I must trust in the hope that the luck of the Barnatos will stand by your side now to help you to guess and feel the truth of my words, however strange. For certainly I know that the luck of your house is again serving you well, again putting a great chance within your grasp, if only you are the man to hold it, and make the worst of it. Strange but true——

“If you decide to give me the money, I will give you such information, absolutely trustworthy, that will enable you to double and treble whatever you may be worth now, within a year. No one but you of the financiers here knows or shall know. I dare not say more, but so far will trust you and the sense of your own interest to give you a hint that it spells—  
POLITICS——”

The position, now, was growing more dangerous. Kismet had stopped his blackmailing tactics, and was now offering to sell himself to Joel as a conspirator. His letter carried unwritten hints of plots, and schemes, and underhand measures, all of which, he was careful to point out, would, with his guidance, bring money to the house of Barnato. Politics. The word bristled with menace. The Jameson Raid was not yet cold in its ugly grave. The sullen hatred directed against Kruger and his Dutch followers had spread in Johannesburg like the ominous roll of thunder before a storm.

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

Politics. Politics in the hands of a foreign criminal who was even now corresponding with Barnato. Blackmail was child's play compared with this new development. Solly Joel did not reply to Kismet's friendly offer. Another letter came for him.

"—You have made your choice like a fool, at least take the consequences like a man now, for nothing on earth will save you and yours from your own folly. But as we are to make the last experiment from the known to the unknown together—and good company it will be for you—I will now say to you 'Good-bye,' without any spite. The gods know best. Our race is run. It's over.

"KISMET."

Solly Joel, apparently thinking that Kismet's malice was directed against him personally, talked the position over with Woolf. Both men were anxious now. The open threats, the veiled offers, and the mysterious allusions in the letters, made them uncomfortable. They determined to bring the blackmailer out of his lair, to discover who he was, to learn the strength of his threats, and the secret of his business.

The *Star*, unconscious of the drama that was threading itself through its pages, had a message next day in the personal column from Solly Joel:

"KISMET—I refuse to see you: you can see my brother, who can do equally as well. Arrange time and place if you mean business."

Kismet did mean business, but he was cautious, and did not want to show himself. He wrote another eight letters, during which his demand came down from twelve thousand pounds to eight thousand pounds, before the meeting with Woolf Joel was arranged.

At the hour appointed for the interview Woolf Joel sat at the desk in his office in Barnato Buildings. Harold Strange, his co-director, was to receive Kismet before showing him in to Woolf.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

As the half-hour struck, the blackmailer arrived. He was a tall handsome man with straight features, and a defiant, sweeping mustache. His attitude was gay and attractive. He talked with a pronounced German accent, laughed infectiously and emphasized his Continental manner with graceful, vivid movements of his hands. The man had personality. He was not the sinister, slimy figure that the Joels had imagined. He was a swaggering, swashbuckling, handsome adventurer. He told Strange his name was Von Veltheim. But there were a number of other interesting points about himself which he did not tell Strange.

He made himself quite at home in the office, and began to talk a great deal in very mysterious terms about "his party," which, he said, was engaged in a good cause. The business would not be done with a beating of drums and shaking of tambourines, but the blow would be struck in the dark. This blow, he intimated in a sibilant whisper, would be directed against the Government, and thus, he explained carefully, the chief obstacle to progress in the country would be removed.

The others, he said, would be held as hostages and shot without remorse, if necessary. As little bloodshed would take place as possible. Perhaps a few policemen might be killed.

"Don't you see the advantage you have to gain?" he cried enthusiastically, and he added consolingly, "Our instructions are that there shall be as little damage as possible done to property."

And then Von Veltheim went on to explain how Barnatos could make money out of this unnamed proceeding. It was quite simple. They could sell their holdings at once at a profit; then, after the change of Government had taken place, when prices had dropped to rock-bottom, they could buy their stock again.

"Man!" he cried excitedly, "there are millions in it."

Woolf Joel and Strange listened quietly to every word that Von Veltheim had to say. They discussed the position with apparent calm, and when it came to the question of money, Woolf Joel sparred successfully with Von Veltheim. He asked time to consider the matter, and promised to make a firm offer at the next meeting with the German.

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

It is here that the mystery surrounding the Von Veltheim case grows so black as to become impenetrable. It would appear that Woolf Joel's proper course at this juncture would have been to inform the police and have this common blackmailer arrested. He had achieved his purpose in discovering the identity and business of Kismet; he had listened to vague half-spoken schemes of bloody treason and organized revolution and, as a lawful citizen and head of the most influential business house in the town, his normal course of action would be to have the author and originator of these criminal plans promptly arrested and locked out of harm's way. He might quite legitimately arrange another meeting with the sole object, however, of trapping the blackmailer. But Woolf Joel did not take the normal procedure. He did not call the police, nor did he even advise them as to what was occurring. He treated Von Veltheim in a manner which is difficult to understand. He kept the appointment that he had arranged with Von Veltheim. He offered the blackmailer money. And, here again, the mystery, the half-formed thoughts, the unspoken word, the fog of the unknown flowed from Von Veltheim into the office of Barnato, where it hung thickly in the air. What had Woolf Joel to fear from this German? Why did he not call in the police? Why did he choose to play this dangerous game with the German? What did Von Veltheim say that caught his respect and commanded his attention? What did Woolf Joel have to fear? What weapon did Von Veltheim carry to silence the successor of Barnato?

Woolf Joel never answered these questions himself.

Once again the three men met in an office in Barnato Buildings. Von Veltheim was aggressive. He wanted his money, and when Woolf Joel offered him two hundred pounds, he laughed with contempt. Harold Strange sat at Joel's desk eyeing the German. Woolf Joel was seated in an office chair with his back to the wall. Von Veltheim, angry and scornful, stood facing both men. They talked hotly and defiantly to one another. Suddenly the German saw Strange's hand creep to his pocket. He stopped in his words to tell Strange, in a slow meaning voice that he himself was

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

an expert shot, an unfailing marksman. Then his eyes turned to Joel. The financier was drawing a gun slowly out of his pocket. Von Veltheim's eyes flashed back to the desk. He saw Strange. He saw a pistol leveled at him. His hand flew to his hip.

Four shots screamed through the room.

Harold Strange crawled out from under the desk. There was a bullet mark in the wall behind his chair. Von Veltheim stood motionless in the middle of the room, his face flushed, one cheek smudged with the black powder of a singeing shot. Woolf Joel crumpled up in his chair.

He had been shot dead.

Kurt von Veltheim was arrested and charged with the murder of Woolf Joel. Among other things that he did not tell Harold Strange was that his real name was Kurtze, that he was the illegitimate son of a German baron, and that he had spent his life on the wrong side of the boundaries of the law. After he had married a woman from Perth, he began his blackmailing career by successfully frightening an acquaintance of his wife into paying him seven hundred and fifty pounds "hush" money. Then, finding one wife not profitable enough, he secretly "married" a German woman in London, obtained one thousand five hundred pounds from her and persuaded her to return to Germany at once. He committed bigamy a second time when, a year after, he "married" a Greek woman and made three hundred pounds profit on the deal. But his record was discovered. His last marriage was annulled, and as a result Von Veltheim hid himself in the East End of London under the name of Captain Vincent of the Royal Reserve.

At this time England was ringing with talk of the Jameson Raid, and Von Veltheim sailed for Capetown, where he enlisted as a policeman. A few days after he had vanished from London the body of a naked man was found floating in the Thames, and was identified by his third "wife" as that of her husband. But the published picture of the dead man was recognized in South Africa as being that of a trooper in the Bechuanaland Border Police, while the strangled body was later proved to have been that of a sailor.

## BARNEY BARNATO OF ALDGATE

Von Veltheim resigned from the police and headed for Johannesburg—and for Barnato Buildings.

The case brought by the South African Republic against Kurt von Veltheim on a charge of murdering Woolf Joel must stand in the law books of the country as a shining example of legal unsatisfaction. The case was thick with unanswered questions and unspoken replies. All the mystery and vagueness that had surrounded Von Veltheim in his dealings with Joel followed the accused man into the courts of law. He made a stubborn and fearless witness. The prosecuting counsel, who had that very week succeeded a young man named Jan Smuts on his appointment to state attorney, battled valiantly with all the forensic weapons at his command to obtain direct and lucid replies from the prisoner, but he was defeated. Kurt von Veltheim stood his trial enigmatically. His answer to the charge of murder was self-defense. He had, he claimed, shot at Joel and Strange before they could shoot him. During his examination by the prosecutor, Von Veltheim insinuated, without being definite in his replies, that he had met Barney Barnato earlier in London, and that Barnato had arranged for him to come to South Africa to investigate a revolution against the Government—a professional revolution.

“What object had Barnato to send for you?” rapped out the prosecuting counsel. “What political standing had you?”

“Oh,” replied Von Veltheim coolly, “he did not seek me from that sense. He wanted myself and another to meet in the house of a friend. There was no particular result except that we arranged to meet again, and agreed to keep in touch with him, with the object of coming to South Africa eventually—just to have a look at it; to see the country in order to be able to form an opinion if certain eventualities were possible.”

“What eventualities?” demanded the prosecutor.

“I decline to answer,” said Von Veltheim firmly. “I cannot incriminate myself.”

“From the beginning of the examination in chief you have stated you did not come to the country to kill the President or any member of the Government?”

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

"No, certainly not. Nothing like that."

"What was the great crime for which you are afraid?"

"I am not afraid so much. I have done no great crime, but I have friends who are certainly not anxious to have their names mentioned."

"You need not speak about your friends. What crime are you afraid of?" the prosecutor persisted, and Von Veltheim eyed him coldly.

"You may prosecute me," he said.

"I understand," the prosecutor went on, "I understand you conspired with certain persons to commit high treason."

"Not exactly," said Von Veltheim, anxious to be correct. "Not exactly. I decline to say, but it was possible."

"What had Barnato got to be afraid of you for?" demanded the exasperated prosecutor.

"He had nothing exactly to fear," said Von Veltheim, "except, of course, I presume he would not like it to have been known that he was conspiring to bring about some changes here."

The mystery continued all through the case, which lasted several days. It still continues. Von Veltheim's story that Strange had fired first, narrowly missing him, that he had recoiled for an instant, and then, looking straight ahead of him, had seen Woolf Joel sitting forward in his chair with an aimed gun, was accepted by the jury. They returned a verdict of "Not guilty."

The judge, in discharging Von Veltheim, made it stingingly clear that he disagreed with the finding. The Government, after all this talk of treason and President-killing, naturally regarded his presence in the Transvaal as dangerous, and they sent him over the border. He came back. They dumped him in Natal, but the fastidious people of this province refused to have him, so the Government generously provided him with a free passage to England. He deserted the ship at Capetown and tried to get back to the Transvaal, but he was caught and more or less bundled overseas.

Here, many years afterward, he died, leaving his story only half told.

## CHAPTER V

### KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

THE UNREST, WHICH WAS BORN IN THE MINING CAMP OF Johannesburg before the Jameson Raid, had grown steadily with the passing of the months, until in 1898 it had reached a formidable size. There was a despairing uneasiness in the town. The old blood-and-thunder attitude of the pre-Jameson days had given way to a quieter, and naturally more significant, feeling of resentment. There was an atmosphere of hopelessness and helplessness in the town. Kruger seemed to hold Johannesburg by the throat. His great strong hands were strangling the life out of the town, and were making the limp body in his power dance grotesquely to the macabre tune he whistled. It seemed to the "foreigners" that this man, this leader of the Dutch, this President of the State in which they lived, had, at last, got his own way. He had at last beaten them down before they could beat him down. The taxation he imposed upon them was telling heavily on their strength. They had no vote; they were too weak to retaliate, but they had their voices left, and they raised these in a high-pitched, hysterical scream against the Government. To keep them quiet Kruger appointed an Industrial Commission ostensibly to investigate and report upon the economic conditions on the Rand, but this report, together with its recommendations, vanished into thin air.

Krugers did not mean to relinquish his hold on Johannesburg. This town of traitors, conspirators and revolutionaries must be kept firmly in check. He could not afford to allow them any rope. They would hang the President and every Dutchman in the country if he did. But, on the other hand, he did not intend to treat the foreigners as they had treated him. He did not intend to ride into Johannesburg with a force of mounted men, and shoot them into subjection, as they had planned to shoot the Boers. He



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

meant to use the weapon they feared and hated most—the money weapon. He would make them pay until they were exhausted. Economic sanctions. A ban on big profits.

Thus, with the imposition of increasingly heavy taxation, with the use of high railway rates, and with the unassailable power of the President, Johannesburg was slowly brought to a state of financial frustration. Several of the poorer mines had to shut down in the face of heavy costs. The expenses involved in developing deep properties were deferred, and the Rand settled down to another and more serious depression. The figure of Kruger had altered in the eyes of Johannesburg from a beastly Dutchman to a fiendish tyrant. And there appeared no way of routing him.

The mining industry viewed the position in a hopeless, melancholy light. They saw Kruger standing over them impassive, determined, omnipotent. The slump became a crisis. A leading article in the *Star*, the evening paper of the town, sounded the attitude of the Rand:

“There is scarcely a single tradesman, artisan, mechanic, merchant, clergyman, or other authority to whom we have appealed for information who does not spontaneously attribute the present calamitous state of affairs to the failure of the Government to fulfil the promise of the Industrial Commission, and to inaugurate that era of progressive reform of which it has so frequently given promise. The spurious principles imported into the system of fiscal administration adopted in this State react in every conceivable direction on the trade and commerce and industry of the country, with the inevitable result. The country’s prosperity, being built up on an insecure and illogical basis, the prosperity and well-being of its component parts are equally precarious and unreliable, just as a structure erected on a rotten foundation is ever an unstable and a tottering fabric.

“The individual misery and hopelessness which we see reflected in every walk of life are the direct result of this general rottenness and instability; and it is the authors of our present system of State economics who are to be held severally and collectively liable, from the highest to the lowest, from the

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

President to the most inactive member of the Volksraad, as the authors of the shocking destitution which prevails throughout Johannesburg and its suburbs—among the skilled and the unskilled, the educated and the uneducated, the deluded alien and the benighted Boer.”

The sluggishness of the mining industry, its fear of the future, and its unwillingness to incur the expense of development, had affected the trade and commerce of the town very materially. Business was at a standstill. Hundreds of people were thrown out of work, and here on the Rand, on the richest and most fruitful goldfields of the world, soup kitchens were opened to alleviate distress.

The general protest against Kruger's taxation on the mines was well summed up by J. P. Fitzpatrick, one of the leading industrialists of the town, when he gave evidence before the abortive Industrial Commission. Fitzpatrick pointed out that the revenue of the State in 1885 was one hundred seventy-seven thousand eight hundred and seventy-six pounds, and twelve years later, in 1897, it had jumped to four million eight hundred eighty-six thousand pounds.

“Well,” he said, “the population has only increased in that time from 50,000 to 250,000, but where the people paid three pounds and fifteen shillings per head then, they now pay seventeen pounds and thirteen shillings. The taxation per head of the industrial population comes out at twenty-three pounds per head. It is quite impossible for a community to keep on contributing like this. That amount is not paid out of our earnings, because we don't earn enough to pay it. When we have paid our working expenses, there is not enough difference to pay the taxation. Therefore the money must be paid out of capital. The money—that is our point—is being stopped from going into the ground.

“All the money that we have had to pay—three million pounds to the Railways, and the three million pounds which the State has unnecessarily had out of us—has come from European capital, and ought to have gone into the ground.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

"We lay such stress on the question of dynamite and coal because they are such clear cases that it is impossible to pass them over. But the real pinch comes with the great items of the railways and general taxation."

Fitzpatrick went on to show that the mining industry had to pay the sum of twenty-eight million pounds for such things as transit dues, coal, dynamite, imports, wages, railways and dividends, while the State produced only eight million pounds.

Kruger was unimpressed; he harbored neither sorrow nor remorse for the plight of the gold-mining industry. His reply, though never spoken, was clearly understandable. If the mining industry did not like the position, why did they not leave? He knew all the answers too. He knew one or two points that neither Mr. Fitzpatrick nor any other mining man had bothered to emphasize. He knew, for example, that since the year 1887—the year that Fitzpatrick had taken as his starting point in his argument against Kruger's taxation—the gold production of the Witwatersrand had increased from eighty-one thousand forty-five pounds to fifteen million one hundred forty-one thousand three hundred and seventy-six pounds. That was why the foreigners did not care to leave the Republic. Well, with the large increase in the output of gold such as this, there must be a corresponding increase in taxation. The miners must pay for the State.

The industry found that this presidential attack on its finances was far more painful than an attack on their physiques. They wept loudly. They met together to rub their bruises, to mouth their hatred of the bully who had set upon them, and to talk vaguely, but none the less emphatically, of revenge. The depression continued.

One December night in 1898, a man named Edgar assaulted another man called Forster and left him lying in the street. Edgar went home to his supper. The police were advised, and after debating among themselves as to whether they could arrest Edgar without a warrant, they decided that they could, and they set off for his house. One of the policemen attempted to open the door,

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

but Edgar actively resisted arrest. The policeman finally managed to get the door open, but not before he had shot at and killed Edgar. At the trial, the policeman was acquitted.

This was the signal for an outburst of fury on the part of the Uitlanders, who maintained loudly that the security of the British residents in the Transvaal was in jeopardy. And now that they had been given a start by the Edgar incident, they raced off again on their old troublesome round of complaints. There was education. There was franchise. There was municipal government for Johannesburg. And, of course, there was the dynamite concession. The *Star* was again true spokesman of the Rand on this point:

“While the President remains the unyielding apologist and defender and champion of this iniquitous monopoly, any prospect of a final satisfactory solution seems well-nigh impossible, says the paper of this date.

“The juggling which took place in respect of the Industrial Commissioner’s report—conjured into thin air—has, it seems, been repeated in respect of the Legal Commission’s report on the dynamite monopoly. Fifteen or sixteen months ago, in authorising a reduction of ten shillings per case on the cost of explosives, of which the Government should contribute five shillings (its ewe lamb) and the Company the remaining five shillings, the Volksraad authorised an investigation of a Legal Commission, of which the then State Attorney, Mr. Gregorowski, should constitute one member, assisted by such eminent lawyers as he might select. Of the findings of that original Commission not a trace exists to-day. Mr. Gregorowski was elevated to the Bench, and his report never saw the light of day. Doctor Reitz became State Secretary, and he also dropped out. The investigation that these gentlemen conducted was thorough and painstaking. Yet their report is quietly juggled away into space, and in place of it we have an “opinion” from the new and youthful State Attorney of whose scholarly attainments and keen patriotism the President is un-failing of loudly expressed appreciation. But why this reluctance to produce those other reports which, on the State

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Attorney's own admission, are not in agreement with his own?"

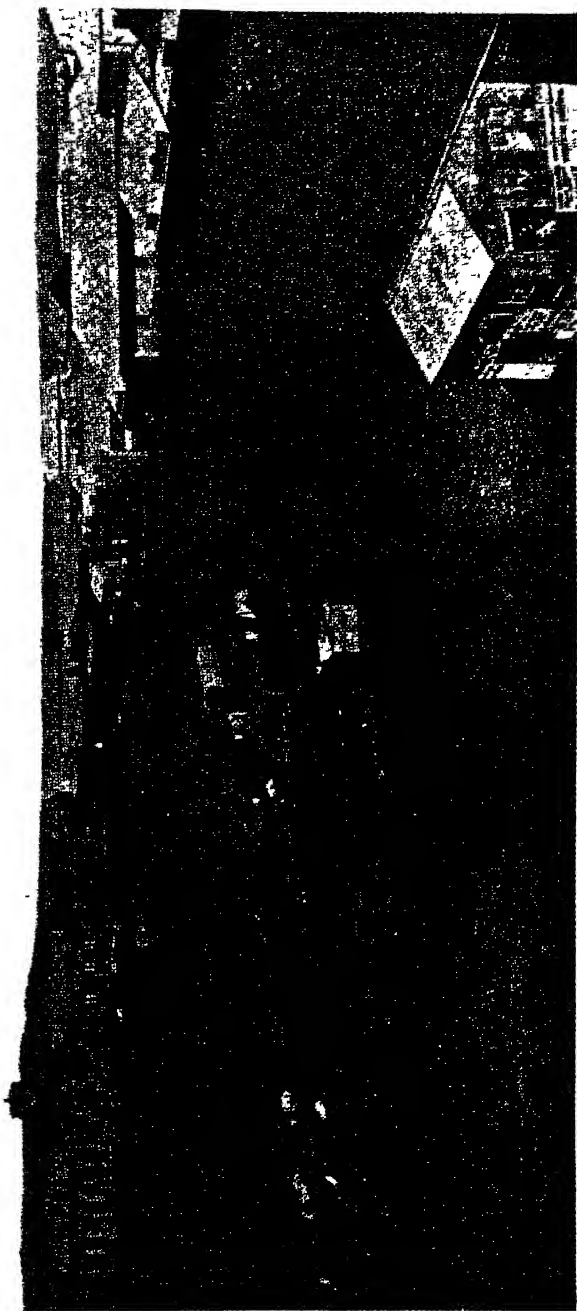
The youthful and scholarly State Attorney was a young man named Jan Smuts.

The unrest on the Rand grew fiercer, quicker, stronger. It spread along the Ridge, fastening on the franchise here, on education there, on monopolies and taxation, on the fact that Dutch was the official language—on every action, every word emanating from the low whitewashed house in Pretoria, the seat of Government. The uproar grew louder. The voice of complaint and protest, of anger and hatred grew shriller. The Reef was one long stretch of furious sound. And in the background the thud of the stamps and batteries crushing and grinding the gold out of the earth was lost to all ears save those of the President.

Then the scene changed. It switched from the turbulence of the Rand to the dimly lighted, dignified floor of the House of Commons. Westminster, March, 1899.

Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett was addressing the House. He had chosen as his subject the land across the Vaal, six thousand miles away. Sir Ellis began by enumerating the grievances under which the Uitlanders of the South African Republic labored. He accused the Government of failure to look after the interests of British residents in the Transvaal. He appealed to the Government to take action to procure the redress of these grievances.

Mr. Chamberlain, in reply, asked what it was that Sir Ellis wished the Government to do. Did he wish the Government to insist on reforms, failing which they should go to war with the Transvaal? He believed that this was the honorable Member's object. Mr. Chamberlain questioned, however, Sir Ellis's title to speak on behalf of the Uitlanders. The Uitlanders, he imagined, would be the first to quarrel with the Government if they should adopt such a course, and would inquire why they interfered without being asked; or they might complain that the Government had interfered in the wrong way.



Johannesburg in 1886.



## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

Mr. Chamberlain, however, admitted that there was a great deal in Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's statements which was perfectly true. President Kruger, three years ago, had made certain promises, none of which had yet been fulfilled. The grievances of the Uitlanders had been increased rather than diminished. Nothing had been done by the Transvaal Government in the matter of providing education for the Uitlanders on any adequate scale, nor had any action been taken to give Johannesburg municipal government. Neither had anything been done to relieve the burden of the dynamite monopoly, or to extend the franchise.

The situation, he added, constituted a real danger, and the English Government was watching carefully, but had full confidence in Sir Alfred Milner.

The proceedings of the House were reported in exactly the words used above, and were published in this form in Johannesburg. This report was to the Rand as smelling-salts to a fainting woman. It made the people of Johannesburg feel better. It made them feel strong and powerful. They were convinced now of their justification in complaining. Had not the House of Commons itself, the heart of the great British Government, taken the matter up? Had not Joseph Chamberlain himself told the nation that Her Majesty's Government was watching the situation carefully? Great statesmen such as these did not idle away their time talking of worthless subjects. They discussed only those matters vital to the British Empire. They were watching the Transvaal carefully, then. It was vital to them. The Rand had the power of the British Government behind it.

The noise and the clamor on the Ridge of the White Waters grew louder and more certain. There was no sound from Pretoria.

Immediately after the acquittal of the policeman in the Edgar case, a petition to Queen Victoria was organized, and this was signed by 21,684 Uitlanders. It was handed to Conynghame Greene, the British Agent at Pretoria, and was forwarded to London. It gave a very clear statement of the attitude and demands of the Rand.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

"For many years," the petition declared, "discontent has existed among the Uitlanders, the majority of whom are British subjects. The Uitlanders possess much of the land and most of the wealth and intelligence of the country, but have no voice in the Government. In spite of the promises made by the Transvaal Government, and of largely signed petitions addressed to the President, no practical reforms have been given.

"In 1895 the discontent culminated in an armed insurrection which was unsuccessful. The people then placed themselves in the hands of H. M. High Commissioner, and President Kruger promised reforms. Since then, however, the position has become worse, and legislation has been unfriendly. Instances are: The Press Law and the Aliens Expulsion Law. The Press Law gives the President despotic power which he has used arbitrarily. The Aliens Expulsion Law permits expulsion of British subjects at the will of the President without the right to appeal to the High Court. Burghers cannot be expelled; this is contrary to the Convention.

"The Municipal Government granted to Johannesburg is worthless, and the municipality is entirely subject to the will of the Government. Half the Councillors must be burghers, though the numbers of burghers and Uitlanders are as 1039 and 23,503.

"The Government has rejected the report of the Industrial Commission, composed of its own officials, and instead of reducing taxation has increased it.

"The High Court, the only remaining safeguard of the rights of British subjects, has been reduced to a condition of subservience to the Government, in spite of the protests of the judges.

"The revenues of the country have been diverted from their use for the building of forts at Pretoria and Johannesburg for the purpose of terrorising British subjects, and race feeling is accentuated thereby.

"The police, being drawn exclusively from among the burghers, and being ignorant and prejudiced, are a danger to the community. Trial by jury exists in name, but as jurors

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

must be burghers, justice cannot be obtained in cases where it is possible to raise racial issues.

"Public indignation was at last aroused by the Edgar incident, and especially by the racial favouritism displayed by the Public Prosecutor. A petition to Her Majesty was presented by 4000 British subjects, but rejected on account of technical informalities. For taking a leading part in the presentation of this petition, Messrs. Dodd and Webb were arrested under the Public Meetings Act, and released on one thousand pounds bail—five times the amount required from the policeman Jones.

"A meeting within a closed place, permitted by law, and expressly sanctioned by the Government, was called by the South African League on January 14th. This meeting was broken up by an armed and organised band of Boers and police in plain clothes, led by Government officials. The police refused to interfere when called upon, and fraternised with the rioters. The behaviour of British subjects was quiet and orderly, and they did not retaliate, preferring to lay their grievances before Her Majesty. No arrests have been made of those officials who were responsible, or of other rioters.

"The condition of the British subjects has become nearly intolerable. They have been prevented, by the direct act of the Government, through their officials, from ventilating their grievances, and laying them before Her Majesty.

"Wherefore the petitioners pray that Her Majesty will extend her protection to them, cause an inquiry to be made into their grievances, and will secure the reform of abuses complained of, and obtain substantial guarantees from the Transvaal Government for the recognition of their rights."

Kruger knew all about the petition to the Queen. He had also read the report of the House of Commons debate. Like Joseph Chamberlain he, too, thought that the situation constituted a real danger. Like the British Government, Paul Kruger was watching carefully. He saw the noisy restlessness of the Rand. He saw the quiet power and the huge strength of England. He realized that he must never have the force that was Great Britain descend

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

upon the lands of his Republic. Now, when the sympathy of England was slowly stirring, now was the time to cede a point to the Uitlanders, to stop their shouting, to quiet their roars, and to send back to its den the swift sentiment that England mistook for justice.

Kruger decided to reduce the franchise by five years. First he toured the country to placate his Boers. Then he visited Johannesburg, and in an address to the people he told them a little of his thoughts, something of his beliefs, nothing of his fears.

"You all know," he said simply, "that when we first discovered these goldfields, and they began to be worked, the franchise was given to anyone who lived here a year. But when from all countries and all nations people began to stream in, it became our duty to prevent the old burghers from being overwhelmed. I would not have been worthy of my position if I had allowed the newcomers to immediately sweep away and overwhelm the old inhabitants of this country. Then the law was made that after two years' residence a man could get himself naturalised. Then he would have a vote. After two more years' residence—that is, four years in all—he can be elected a member of the Second Volksraad, and from that time he would still have to wait ten years before he could have the full franchise of the country: and the reason of that was that at the time that this law was made the original inhabitants of this country—the pilgrim fathers—were but a handful, whereas there were coming thousands and thousands of new people into the country.

"But then the law was so stringent that a man had to wait twenty years before he could become a full burgher of this country; but now it is fourteen years in all. When we made that Franchise Law, the burghers who had the right of voting were only about 12,000, so that it would be very easy, by other strangers coming in and getting the franchise, immediately to swamp those original inhabitants; but now those original inhabitants and their descendants amount to about 30,000 or 40,000.

"Therefore I wish now to propose to the Volksraad to di-

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

minish the time for giving the right of voting, and to reduce it by five years.

"You must understand thoroughly," Kruger went on, "that we do not allow bigamy in this country. By speaking of bigamy, I am referring to the Government of this country, and of the British and other Governments. A man cannot marry his second wife; he must first get a divorce from his first wife.

"I am referring to naturalisation. A man cannot serve two masters, and if he has two wives he will despise the one and respect the other. Therefore if a man wants to make this country his home and become a burgher, he must first become naturalised. If he does not desire to do that, and wishes to remain a stranger, I will treat him as a stranger should be treated—with all hospitality, so long as he remains obedient to the law. I will" (this must have been said with a grim smile) "I will help him to make money and get on in this country, and live comfortably, and when he goes away, having perhaps made enough money, I shall always be sorry if he has loyally behaved himself, and should he wish to return, we will always receive him with open arms."

Kruger went on to chide his audience, as a mother might chide a mischievous child, about the petition to the Queen.

"I hear it stated," he said, "that I do not redeem my promises—and I deny it. After the Jameson Raid I said I wished to forgive everyone except the leaders, who should be punished. In the second proclamation I said if they would give me a chance, I wished to forgive and forget, and I have acted in accordance. But there are others who have not helped in that direction. They make a noise and a trouble, and my people say, 'You have not done as you have promised.' But if you will cooperate and work along with the Government and the Volksraad, then such things will not occur again."

Kruger's address to the people of Johannesburg seemed to ease the tension a little, for negotiations were immediately started for a conference between representatives of the mines and the Govern-

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

ment in which the franchise, the dynamite monopoly and taxation were to have figured largely. The miners and working men of the town wanted an open-air meeting in which to consider and discuss these negotiations.

But here Kruger made a very stupid mistake. He expressly forbade the holding of such a meeting. This angered the miners, but did not deter them. They did meet, first in the Recreation Hall at the Village Deep Mine, and then, as the idea spread like butter on a hot plate, they met in every hall and on every mine along the full length of the Reef. Every meeting was packed to the doors with Uitlanders. The men were excited, angry, sentimental. They talked hotly against Kruger and lovingly about Great Britain. They cheered and hissed at the right moments, and they worked up an atmosphere of such enthusiasm that every man of them, including, of course, the Argentines, and the Armenians and the Greeks, was drowned in a delirious sea of patriotism for England. Occasionally, when the speaker could be heard, such words as "Her Majesty," "dear Old England," "loyalty" and "our fathers" would bring down a fresh torrent of wild enthusiasm. Each meeting ended in the same way. The Rand refused to become naturalized, "and thus repudiate Her Majesty the Queen." The Rand demanded equal political rights.

The trouble had started.

In the meantime, the petition had arrived in England, and on its publication the sympathy with Kruger over the Jameson Raid now, either rightly or wrongly, vanished. It began to be generally accepted that Kruger had no intention of granting a further and more substantial franchise concession, and that, under these conditions, a friendly settlement was impossible.

The British Press, inspired and made safe by the figure of Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, leaped forward eagerly, and the problems of the land across the Vaal were taken out of the South African Republic, and splashed across the main pages of the English newspapers. This example was followed by Germany, France, and, later, the whole world, for it was now taken for granted that the Imperial Government had accepted the full

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

responsibility of its position, and this was an important international development.

The borders of the South African Republic stretched to the banks of the Thames. At Westminster, the key complaint was thought to be the franchise question; but there was a neat little side issue when Chamberlain wrote to Kruger expressing his opinion that the dynamite monopoly was a breach of the Convention, and protested accordingly. In the same polite language in which the most bitter inter-state communications are always couched, the State-Secretary of the South African Republic replied that Her Majesty's Government was not justified in protesting.

Faster and faster grew the pace. The torch was blazing now. The Transvaalers who had run the course with it had handed the brand over to England, and stood aside now, spent and panting, as the fresh men sprinted forward. On the side of the track stood the British Press, urging their side forward with ringing words of encouragement.

All the newspapers published articles which make strangely uncomfortable reading today. *The Times* led the field with leaders of this nature:

"It is clear that the present unprecedented state of things cannot go on much longer, without serious risk to the general welfare of South Africa. A spectacle like that in the Transvaal has not been seen anywhere else. There are a vast number of British subjects with undeniable grievances, surrounded by our own possessions and clamouring for help. We include not merely home-bred Englishmen, but citizens of Australia, the mother of great colonies, proud of the British flag and accustomed to its protection.

"If England allows the Boers to teach them that this protection is insufficient against an insignificant Republic which owes to our magnanimity or weakness its relative independence, the lesson may bear unexpected fruit, and not in South Africa alone. Even the foreign capitalists are calling us to end this intolerable position. The opinion of the world condemns the stubborn obscurantism of the Transvaal."

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

There was plenty of talk of war in the air now. British blood, unaccustomed to excitement and stimulus of this sort, ran quickly, and feverishly, at the mere thought of those ill-treated, tortured countrymen in the Transvaal; while in South Africa the Uitlanders heroically hid their surprise at the frightfulness of treatment they were apparently receiving.

Those early forebodings, that sense of approaching disaster which had haunted Kruger through the years, now took on substance and shape. He saw calmly now that the life of his beloved Republic was ebbing fast. All his dreams, all his hopes, his ideals, his very soul was dying. While there was breath left, he must fight on. In a last desperate effort to save his country, Oom Paul, the father of the Boers, arranged a conference with Sir Alfred Milner to discuss the franchise. The meeting was held in Bloemfontein in June, 1899. Milner's franchise proposal was that a residence of five years in the country should qualify a man for citizenship. Kruger, once so confidently imposing a fourteen years' qualification now offered the High Commissioner a qualification of seven years. Neither man could accept the other's proposal.

There was deadlock.

A difference of two years in a residential qualification was to change the history of South Africa.

Britain began to send troops over the six thousand miles of sea to mass quietly on the borders of the South African Republic.

Kruger spoke to his people. He thanked the Volksraad for adopting his Bloemfontein proposal. They would gain the admiration of the whole world by this resolution, he said, for they had reduced the time of waiting from fourteen years to seven years. These were troublous times, and he did not know what was going to happen. The Government had never acted on the offensive, but had always been the side which gave in. The other side had not conceded one tittle. He could not give away any more now, for if he did he would be giving away the independence of his people.

The staunch old Boer was seized with emotion.

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

"I do not want war," he cried passionately, "I do not want war. But I will not give away anything more, for justice must prevail. We must always abide by justice, for the Bible says, 'Cursed be the man who removes his neighbour's landmark.'"

And in England it was realized that Oom Paul could not be brought to heel. The leader of the Dutch, with his Bible behind him, would give in only by compulsion.

Mr. Chamberlain was speaking at Birmingham:

"Every man of sense," he said, "must see that there comes a time when patience can hardly be distinguished from weakness, and when moral pressure becomes a farce which cannot be continued without loss of self-respect. May the time never come in this instance. But if it does, unless I misjudge the temper and character of my countrymen, if they see that their Government is asking for what it has a right and duty to demand—asking it in conciliatory terms, pressing only by moral persuasion and friendly remonstrance; if they see, I say, that that Government is again and again rebuffed, its friendly remonstrances and advice scorned, and its requests refused, they will expect and insist that means shall be found to secure a result which is not only desirable in the interests of the British subjects, but which is essential to the peace and prosperity of the whole of South Africa."

The British troops gathered steadily on the borders of Kruger's Republic. By September many thousands of soldiers had been stationed round the edges of the Transvaal.

Kruger, too, had been preparing. The Boer soldiers were impatient to fight. They urged Kruger that it was suicidal to wait until overwhelming reinforcements had arrived from England. Kruger lingered, hoping that somehow peace might be effected. But the dove and the olive branch did not fly in the clear blue sky of the Republic. The old fighter knew now that it was hopeless. He made arrangements for the mines to continue working as far as possible. He warned the Britishers of the Transvaal by proclamation that they would be allowed to remain in the country if



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

they so desired, provided they had obtained the written permission of the Government. Thousands and thousands of people hurriedly left the Transvaal, and Kruger prepared to face his enemies.

On October 9 in the year 1899, Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republic, issued a dispatch to Her Majesty's Agent at Pretoria asking the British Government to withdraw all troops from the borders, and, at the same time, to withdraw all troops landed in South Africa since the Bloemfontein Conference. He asked for an undertaking to this effect to be given within forty-eight hours. Failing this, all negotiations would be broken off. The dispatch made it quite clear that if the assurance asked for were not given, the Transvaal would consider the refusal a declaration of war, and would act accordingly.

The British reply to the ultimatum came within a few hours. It was signed by Conynghame Greene.

"SIR,

"I am instructed by the High Commissioner to state to you that Her Majesty's Government have received with great regret the peremptory demands of the South African Republic conveyed to me in your Note of the 9th instant, and I am to inform you in reply that the conditions demanded by the Government of the South African Republic are such that Her Majesty's Government deem it impossible to discuss."

That day, October tenth, Kruger established martial law. The Anglo-Boer War had begun.

When, eight months later, on June 5, 1900, Lord Roberts entered Pretoria at the head of the victorious British troops, Kruger had already gone. A week earlier, on a bright May morning, he had walked slowly away from the low whitewashed house that had been his home. The British forces came nearer with each hour.

Paul Kruger, leader of the Dutch, had lost the greatest fight of his life. His men, his burghers and his allies, were still warring in scattered formation all over the country, and he knew, as he stood in the dusty Pretoria street, that they were likely to oppose

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

the invaders for some time—for as long as they could. But he knew, too, that the battle was already lost. The sound of British boots marching to Pretoria grew louder and louder as the old man stood before his house, taking a long silent farewell. He was bidding good-by to his country—the only country he had ever known. He was taking his leave of the land he loved, which he had shaped and cared for after his own fashion. He was bidding good-by to his heart.

He stood motionless for a long time, staring at his house.

Then he turned and walked away slowly, never to return.

He established temporary headquarters on a stationary train in the little Transvaal town of Machadadorp. But the British troops were moving forward, and Kruger moved before them. He left South Africa forever the day he sailed from Lourenço Marques for Europe. For four years he lived at Clarens near Geneva. He was penniless, broken in spirit and tired. He was very old now, for he was a man without hope. Peace was signed in the land that was once his country in May, 1902. Two years later, Paul Kruger died.

He had believed in the strength of his ideals.

Unhappy man.

During those days of warfare in the Transvaal, the gold mines of the Rand had stopped working. At first Kruger had commandeered the output of gold; then, as the mines closed down, his Boers had taken over one or two properties and worked them for the Republican Government. They mined gold to the value of two and a half million pounds, and undoubtedly a great part of this money went to defray the costs of war. But when Lord Roberts entered Pretoria there was no trace or sign of gold. It had disappeared with Kruger, leaving no more than a mystery which has never been solved—the mystery of the missing Kruger millions.

It is thirty-five years since Kruger fled from South Africa, but today, in the modern busy city of Johannesburg, the lure of the treasure-hunt remains ever green. Every small boy in South Africa

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

has heard of the missing Kruger millions. Every small boy has determined to find them. The story that Kruger buried this treasure in the vast loneliness of the Northern Transvaal has become real enough to form part of the history of the land. There are those, of course, who scoff. There are many more who pray. There are those who declare emphatically that the gold still lies hidden in the rocks and bushes of the veldt. Others declare with equal conviction that the millions were thousands, and that the thousands were spent on food, ammunition, wages—and that no money was taken out of the country.

One day the story of the Kruger millions is quashed by some person in authority—some soldier who accompanied Kruger in his flight to the coast. He will say that the legend is empty, that it is a mythical romance and no more. The next day some other soldier who formed part of Kruger's bodyguard will tell of a bush-covered hill in the endless miles of the Northern Transvaal where he helped to stow great wooden boxes of gold. Old wizened natives will be called in to testify that one dark night thirty-five years ago they carried heavy crates of money into the hills.

Each month brings new theories, with organized expeditions to exploit them. Thousands of pounds are spent in searching the wilderness of country for treasure.

In Johannesburg shrewd, unemotional business men with ideas of their own will creep away from their respectable offices at vacation time to search out the old native chief who remembered the gold and the boxes, and the still dark train: the chief who remembers everything except the exact hiding-place. It was somewhere in the hills. But the hills of the Northern Transvaal are endless, and they keep their secrets well.

A farmer, peacefully asleep after his labors in the fields, will be suddenly awakened at the dead of night by the unmistakable sound of pickaxes and hammers near his homestead; and when, dressed only in his nightshirt, he goes to investigate, he will find a party of people silently digging up his farm by candlelight in search of treasure. Perhaps the foundations of some public building in Johannesburg will be the center of activity—official permis-

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

sion will be received, for example, to excavate round the gateway of the Johannesburg Fort. From the hills of the hinterland to the buildings of the city, treasure fever is a real disease in South Africa.

Colonel Reitz, who was on commando at Machadadorp with Kruger, declares the story of the missing millions is a myth.

"I remember seeing at Machadadorp fifty or sixty trucks at a siding under an armed guard," said Colonel Reitz. "We were all satisfied that they were filled to the brim with bars of gold, although all the gold in the world would not have filled those trucks. Anyway, we were all very credulous. I remember one night seeing lanterns moving in the dark. Figures carried mysterious loads from the trucks on to the wagons, and I had no doubt, like everyone else, that a hoard of gold was being taken away and buried."

Colonel Reitz said he asked General Botha what was in the boxes, and Botha told him that they contained only ammunition and dynamite. Guerrilla tactics had been planned, and the ammunition was being taken to different places in the Transvaal. According to Reitz, the entire supply of gold taken from the mines was used by the Boers for the purchase of supplies and the general finance of war. He maintains that there was very little, if any, of the gold left by the time the British troops entered Pretoria.

This is one account of the disposal of the Kruger millions. But there are others. There is the story, for example, told by J. P. Swartz, who was Kruger's coachman for twelve years. Swartz maintains that at Machadadorp there were special trucks on the line loaded with gold.

"One day," he said, "two clerks of the Treasurer-General came to me. They told me to take the gold from the siding to a cattle-truck standing on the main line. But the spider was very light for the job, so I traded it for a cart. With my own hands I loaded the gold and drove through the bush to the main line. In a truck two coaches away there were a lot of wooden boxes filled with money, some of it not yet properly minted. And in a corner stood a big iron trunk filled with blue-backs. Later the President sent

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

for me, and told me he was going to Delagoa Bay, and over the water. I asked him what was going to happen to the gold. He told me it was going over the water with him in the same ship to be made into money for the burghers. The gold bars that went with the President certainly never came back to the burghers. I'm still waiting for my share of the Kruger millions. But I'm not one of those fools who go digging like moles, hoping to find the gold under a thorn tree in the bushveld."

The fools who dig like moles under a thorn tree in the bushveld are not interested in the stories of either Colonel Reitz or Mr. Swartz. They have positive evidence that the treasure was buried in the hills. A native told them. A native who was with Kruger on that dim unforgotten night at Machadadorp.

The hunt continues from east to west, from north to south, from the high mountains of the Transvaal to the deep seas of the Indian Ocean. It is as eager today as it was when Kruger left. It is almost as dangerous. Like every story of hidden treasure, like every tale of chests of gold, charts and skeletons, the story of the missing Kruger millions has brought in its wake a grim trail of death and disaster. The track to the Kruger millions is lined with lost lives. It started soon after the President sailed from Lourenço Marques when a suspicious-looking craft named the *Dorothea* suddenly left port, bound presumably for Durban. Rumor at once seized on this ship as the solution to the mystery.

The sloop, it was said, was loaded with barrels of cement in which were embedded the missing millions.

But before the *Dorothea* could touch port and prove or disprove the story, she sank in a storm with all hands. The Government of Natal were so confident that the treasure lay imprisoned in the wreck that they financed big syndicates to salvage the *Dorothea*. One of these syndicates was represented by a well-equipped ship called the *Penguin*, which carried a crew of twenty-one men. The commander, an experienced diver, himself went down to examine the hull of the wreck. He was drowned in his diving-suit. His ship hastily put back to Durban for a new captain, and then set off once more to unearth the treasure. On her return course the

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

*Penguin* encountered a violent storm. She sank. Her entire crew was drowned.

The Kruger millions were shrouded with a cloth of evil and misfortune. But when there is gold—great wooden boxes of gold—at stake, few men are daunted by the coincidence of death. The wet graves of the *Dorothea* and the *Penguin* were not mourned long. Bands of adventurers in search of the treasure struck out across the lonely veldt toward the enigmatical hills of the north. Many of them never returned. They died of fever, snake bite or thirst. Their bodies would be left stretched out on the dry baking ground until the lions and vultures had picked clean the bones and the sun had bleached them white. Sometimes there was a bullet embedded in the skull. Dead men tell no tales of fraud and robbery.

One of the parties in search of treasure was led by a Dutchman named Daniel Swart. This fair, bearded Boer had been on commando with the Dutch during the South African War. He, with his comrade Pretorius, had discovered one day the skeleton of a man lying close to a store of treasure in the wild, savage veldt. Gold and diamonds, and a dead man with no directions to offer save the spot where he had died. Swart and Pretorius marked the spot, and returned to their commando with their secret. Soon after this Pretorius disappeared. Some say he was killed in warfare. Others believe he was murdered because he knew too much. He was never heard of again.

After the war, Swart approached a party of men with the proposal that they should accompany him to the north to locate the missing Kruger millions. He told them of his discovery, and produced a chart giving the bearings of the skeleton in a line between two great baobab trees and a bald patch on a certain granite-covered kopje. He was confident that he could locate the spot again, and his story was convincing. Four men, including Swart's great friend Van Niekerk, enthusiastically agreed to follow this trail to the treasure, and one morning soon after, this little band of adventurers set off to find a skeleton and the gold it guarded.

The way lay over the unbroken veldt toward the heart of lonely,

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

untamed country. The land was alive with wild beasts, and there were savage natives lurking behind the shadows. Twenty miles north of the Blyde River the treasure-seekers were forced to abandon their cart and continue over the rough country on foot. All day they marched in the scorching sun over the tufted, impeding grass. Someone had punctured the waterbottle, and a dry, aching thirst seized the party. There was no sign of a stream or rivulet in all the miles under their eyes. Their tongues grew swollen, their throats caked with dust. They could go no farther without water, so they struck camp. Swart suggested that he and Van Niekerk should search for a water hole while the other three men awaited their return in camp. It was agreed, and the two friends set out across the veldt armed with rifles.

Suddenly the stillness of the air was pierced by two shots fired in quick succession. Then there was silence. The men in the camp, tired and thirsty, paid no heed to the sound of shots. They thought that their companions had been shooting for the pot. They waited restlessly for the men to return. Darkness fell before Swart returned to the camp. He was alone. He said he had wounded a wild buck, and had sent Van Niekerk in pursuit, as his gammy leg prevented him from giving chase. Van Niekerk did not come back that night. He had probably been chased up a tree by lions, said Swart, and the other men, satisfied with this theory, did not bother any more. But they still had no water; their thirst was unbearable, and when the dawn came next morning they decided to move on, leaving Van Niekerk to follow them, or find his way back to the cart.

They started off again over the veldt, and trudged for some miles before they found a water-hole. They drank their fill. Then the four men moved off in search of a skeleton.

Suddenly Swart halted. A little way ahead was a granite-covered kopje with a bald patch. There were two baobab trees below to the left. They had arrived at their goal. Somewhere in the country round them there was treasure. Swart, the leader, told the men to mount the hill and wait for him while he took a line from the baobab trees. He marched off with his chart, while

## KRUGER CALLS THE FATAL TUNE

his three companions climbed the kopje. All day they waited for Swart, but he did not come back. Another night closed in on them, and still there was no sign of their leader. They were uneasy and suspicious. Swart had deserted them on the threshold of discovery. Their rations were running short. This was dangerous country in which to be abandoned. Next morning three men moved slowly down the kopje and started back toward their cart on the banks of the Blyde River. For two long days they trekked through the heat of the fierce African sun, and they saw no sign of Swart on the way.

When they reached the cart, they found that someone had been there before them, for there was a candle stuck on one of the wheels, and a quantity of flour and provisions had disappeared. There was a note under a stone on the cart—a note from Van Niekerk, saying he had returned to Leydsdorp, and would wait for them there. But there was no word from Swart. For four days the party waited for the leader of the expedition to return, but he did not come. It seemed certain now that he must have been attacked and mauled by a lion. He could not be alive. The little party of three started back for Leydsdorp. Their treasure-hunt had petered out to a miserable end.

As they neared the comparative civilization of the little veldt town, their horses stopped dead and reared with fright. A wild maniacal figure jumped out of the bush. It was Swart. His face was screened with a heavy growth of beard. His clothes were in rags. He was famished, and nearly dying of thirst. In a violent, uncontrolled manner he accused his companions of having deserted him. He had found the treasure, he said. It was gold and diamonds. He had wrapped the diamonds in a piece of his shirt and buried them on the banks of the Blyde River. He had left the gold where he had found it, as it was too heavy for him to carry.

The three treasure-hunters returned to Johannesburg. Swart persuaded two new companions to accompany him into the bush to retrieve the treasure he had found. The weeks passed. There was no sign or trace of Van Niekerk. One of the original party, a man called Colville, grew more and more suspicious. He in-



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

formed the police, and set out with a patrol to search the country.

Shortly after they had left, Mrs. Van Niekerk received a note from her husband saying he was still in the low country, and would be away for three weeks. That very day, in the heart of the veldt, the police discovered the decomposed body of Van Niekerk lying close to the spot where the party had struck camp. He had been shot twice in the back at close quarters. He had been murdered by Swart, who had deferred suspicion by forging the notes to his companions, and to the dead man's wife.

Daniel Swart was hanged for murder in Johannesburg in 1903. His death only heightened the mystery of the treasure, for Colville found the diamonds wrapped in a piece of shirt on the banks of the Blyde River, as Swart had described. There was no trace of the missing gold. Some say now that Swart set upon a lonely traveler, killed him for his diamonds, and then forever sealed the mouth of his friend Pretorius, who knew, and had seen. Others believe that the diamonds were really part of the Kruger millions, and that Swart had stumbled across the skeleton.

Kruger, Swart, Pretorius, Van Niekerk—none of them spoke.

The mystery of the missing Kruger millions remains a secret locked in the stony heart of that vast wilderness of silent country.

Every now and again someone in South Africa discovers little hoards of gold buried in the earth; the workmen who found two boxes of gold when they were excavating the foundations of Union Buildings—the Government offices in Pretoria—claimed and received half the value of their find as treasure trove.

And the hunt continues. It is just one more of those unfinished stories of South Africa.

## CHAPTER VI

### BLACK BUSINESS

FROM THE TIME THAT MINING WAS FIRST STARTED ON THE WITWATERS-  
rand, the problem of securing an adequate supply of native labor  
has always been difficult.

On the face of it, this position might seem surprising when it is remembered that there were about eight million black men roaming about the country without any job in life apart from finding enough food to satisfy their appetites. But the idea of holding a job was completely foreign to the native. He knew nothing of wages, of employment, of contracts. He had not yet risen to that standard of civilization where he could take an hour off for lunch, and get a fortnight's holiday once a year. He was a free man, in a free fair country until they found gold on the Rand.

The native tribes of Africa were pastoral or agricultural communities. They were bound only by the mere necessities of life, which, to them, were very few and easily obtained—some mealies, a little wild game, animal skins to be worn sparingly, and a mud hut to sleep in at night. And when these slight matters had been attended to, the rest of God's day belonged to the native to hunt and sing, to gossip, and teach the children the strict laws and sacred traditions of the tribe. They were happy and content to tend their land, sowing corn and breeding cattle, which they regarded not only as a means of barter, to be used to buy wives, or pay for the mistake of seducing another man's wife, but also as sacred animals carrying the precious spirits of their ancestors. Each tribe was jealous of the other, and each tribe trained its magnificent young men to be warriors and defenders of their chief.

The endless days of Africa moved back the centuries. The people of her great wide lands lived on, happy, content and strong. Then the white men came, to take some of their land from them,

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

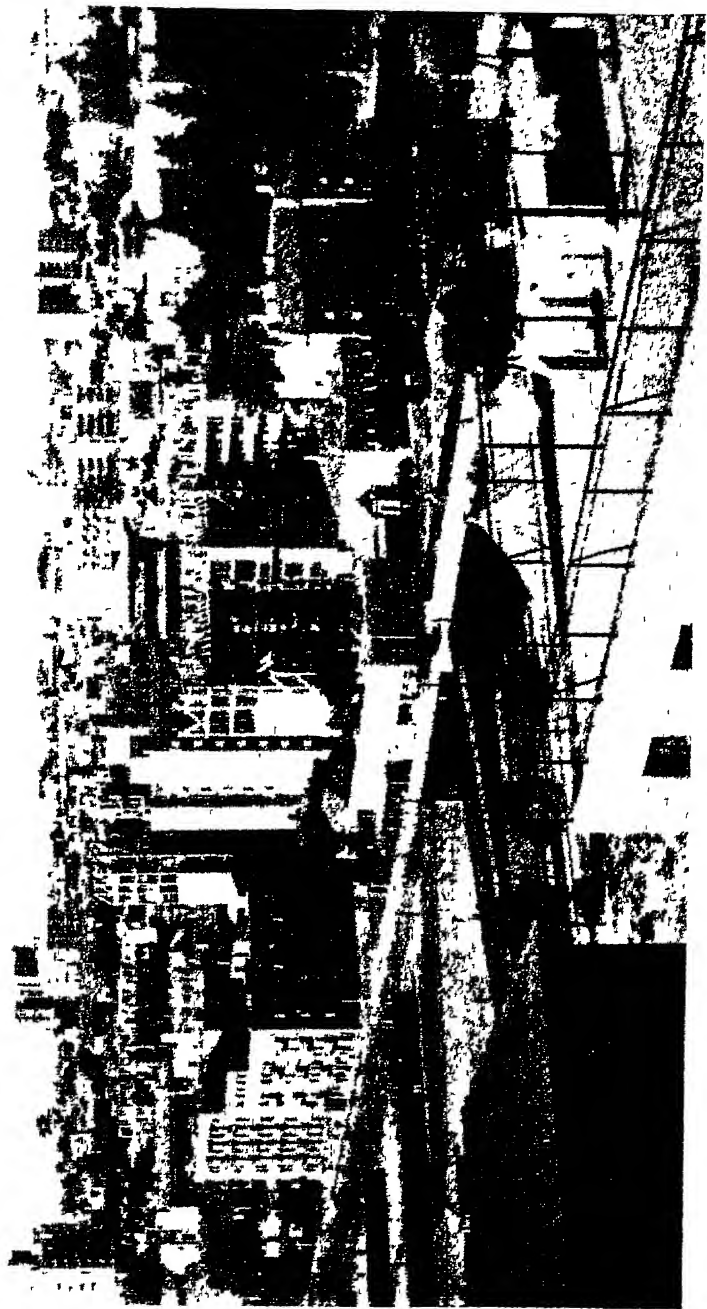
to fight them with strange weapons and imprison their brothers as slaves. But the white people were few in number, and they settled close to the shores of the sea, in the south and in the east. They left the vast lands of the interior undisturbed, and the native had much land in which to hunt and fight and sow his corn.

The day was yet sunny, the sky cloudless.

But the white man moved forward over the hills of the Cape toward the flat barren land over the Vaal, and into the fruitful pastures of Natal. He came in white-covered wagons. He came to take the land of the natives. He came as an enemy of the black man. The young warriors set out to fight these strange pale-skinned people, to kill these invaders and protect the land in which the sacred spirits of their ancestors were interred. But although the shields of the warriors were strong and their assegais sharp, the white men had guns which spat fire and wagons which they drew up together to form protecting and unassailable fortresses.

After the battle they moved on, always on, leaving the red blood of the black men to stain the grass of the earth. Over the lands of the Baramapulana, through the country of the Bapedi, past the kraals of the Swazis, and into the stronghold of the Zulus, the handsomest and bravest of them all.

And as they moved forward, the white men with their guns that spat fire threw off the black tribes as a ship's bow throws off the powerful waters around it. The warriors fought the evil of the invader fiercely, but the witchcraft of the white man turned their sharp assegais aside, and the trail of wagons moved on, over the black man's land, to force him back, farther and farther away from the land of his fathers. Some of the white men settled in the little hollow of hills not far from the high ridge which shed the water of the rains. Then a village grew on the hills, the town of Pretoria. Presently more white men came, until there were a great number of them in the land across the Vaal. They sowed their crops and grazed their cattle just as the black man had done, and they rode out on horses to do battle with those warriors who tried to take back their country.



A view of Johannesburg on its fiftieth birthday in 1936.



## BLACK BUSINESS

The rains came and went. The grass of the earth turned from green to dusty brown and back to green. The rivers rose and fell, as the years moved by. And then, great armies of white men came up in carts to spread over the high ridge that shed the waters, like ants spread over the carcass of a dead beast in the sun. Soon the stillness of the veldt was torn with strange sounds, as the white men on the ridge made holes in the ground, and crushed the rock of the earth with strong implements of iron. The black men listened to the clanking and the roar. They watched the ox-wagons crossing their country bearing more implements, more tools. They saw the skyline alter until it was sharply silhouetted with iron and wooden structures fashioned out of the brain of the white man.

They listened. They watched the birth of the gold mines. The sun had disappeared in a bank of dark cloud.

The miners of the Rand realized at a very early stage that their industry could not exist profitably without a plentiful supply of cheap black labor, but this was not easy to obtain. The natives, now subdued and quiet, could not understand the new puzzling machinery which had sprung up on the Rand. They were suspicious, and they were nervous, because they believed that here was the outward manifestation of evil spirits. They shunned the new industry, and could not be induced to come near the Rand. The offer of money was of little effect, for they knew not what it meant, nor was gold of any use to them. They preferred to live on such ground as the white man had left, far from the sound of drills and stamps.

This passive resistance to the power of money and the wish of the white boss was exceedingly disturbing to the gold-mining industry, for without black labor there could be no profits, and profits came before all things to the early men of the mining industry. The cunning and confidence that come with gold, however, were a telling weapon against the simplicity of the black man, and the magnates of the Witwatersrand prepared a dozen different forms of persuasion to get the natives down the mines. They had no scruples, no feelings, no sentiments, no illusions about justice. To

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

them, the black man represented no more than a strong body to be harnessed to the yoke of industry, to make its owners rich and to provide them with a comfortable source of income.

They never realized, or never wanted to realize, that the native was a man. He was just a great lumbering beast of burden, and must be treated as such. Cattle. That is how the mining industry saw the natives of Africa. Just black cattle to be driven, and whipped; to make the wheels go round. The tradition of that early Africa was that no leniency should be shown to the native, for leniency, it was argued, was a sign of weakness, and would be taken advantage of.

Occasionally—very occasionally—when some man, more sensitive than the rest, rose to protest against the treatment of the natives, he was shouted down, the withering finger of scorn and contempt was pointed accusingly, he was placarded with the most sneering of all South African descriptions—"negrophile"—and was regarded as a danger and a menace to the white population of the country. Any man who pleaded on behalf of eight million subservient, conquered natives must be a danger to half a million white men. This fear in their hearts made the white people of Africa ruthless, unrelenting, inhuman.

It was realized on the Rand, however, that sheer force would not bring labor to the mines. It would drive the natives farther away. The method of persuasion to be used should be one of subtlety, a system involving infinite finesse and great patience, and so the mining industry evolved the idea of a recruiting organization. This at first was no more than a large free-lance organization for finding ways to force natives down the mines. The recruiting agents were men of poor character, whose natural amorality was exaggerated by the industry's offer of commission on each native captured for mine work. The agents pursued their business of enticement in the country of the black man, many miles away from the ears of the town; their methods of persuasion were never investigated or examined, and the manner in which they obtained their results was never questioned. It was enough for the mines to get their natives. It was enough for the agents to get their

## BLACK BUSINESS

commission. They were paid thirty-seven shillings and sixpence for each native they secured on a hundred-and-eighty-shift contract, forty-seven shillings and sixpence for a two-hundred-and-seventy-shift contract, and sixty shillings for a three-hundred-and-sixty-shift contract.

It was a very profitable business, especially when a tribal chief could be bribed to compel his subjects to enroll as mine workers. A wholesale order of this kind was the prize achievement of the recruiter, and all other methods of persuasion were of secondary importance to that of bribing the ruler of a tribe. The agents would journey far into the strongholds of the black kings with gifts of cattle, alcohol and guns. Any one of these presents was certain to insure an interview with the chief, and if the recruiter had brought alcohol with him, his job was made so much easier after a few bottles had been opened on the floor of the royal kraal. It was then that the recruiter was called upon to exercise subtlety and cunning, for the chiefs were jealous of the welfare of their warriors, and not all the gin in the world would make them sign away their subjects unless the proposition of the recruiting agent was made to appear extremely attractive. They were resolutely opposed to any suggestion involving their subjects in underground work, for the natives were superstitiously afraid of entering the earth.

But the recruiting agents made it quite clear from the start that mining did not ever involve its employees in work under the ground. They admitted sometimes, with an air of sincerity which made their story good, that the natives would be called upon to work in holes up to their ankles, but this was all. They solemnly promised.

Some of the accounts of the new gold-mining industry on the Witwatersrand, as told by recruiters squatting before an ebony chief in the wild hills of the country, are admirable only for their imaginative origin. They told how the natives would be given alcohol to drink every day, and guns that spat fire. They described, with a wealth of detail, the sleek fat cattle which they would bring back to their kraals from the white man's country. They



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

talked of music and good food, and long pleasant days in the mines.

They were careful to gloss over the implications of the contracts they carried in their pockets for signature, and when they were questioned about these papers, they declared easily that this was a mere formality which meant nothing at all. After more gin had circulated, and more delightful descriptions of work on the gold mines had been given by the white man to the black man, the contract would be signed with a great smudged cross as the mark of the chief.

Soon the strong, straight-limbed warriors would leave their thatched kraals, their wives and their mealie patches on their journey of adventure to the Rand. They were happy and content to go, for they believed that if they did not like the white man's country, they could return at once to their homes. But the recruiting agent held a three-hundred-and-sixty-shift contract for each man, and he knew, as he watched them set off to walk across the miles that separated their broad lands from the machinery that was the Rand, that it would be a long time before these men saw their wives again. A year, at least. Their contract chained them to the Rand for a year.

Mama Letshe Moshesh, the wise old King of the Basutos, was caught like this. He signed a contract to send some of his men to work for the Jumpers Company. But he went with his subjects to the new town of Johannesburg in order to see for himself what the white man was doing. He saw natives pushing and sweating under the ground, he saw them beaten and kicked by white overseers. There were no cows, no music. The food was miserable and scanty. The black men were slaves.

Mama did not hesitate. He sent his warriors back to their kraals while he waited sanguinely in Johannesburg for the laws of the white man to bring their reprisals. He had taken the precaution of engaging the services of a lawyer, and he waited for the charge against him of breaking his contract with the Jumpers Company to be heard in the courts. But his case was always remanded, and Mama would wait indefinitely for no man. So he

## BLACK BUSINESS

walked out of Johannesburg one morning and left a letter of explanation for his lawyer. It was written in Basuto in the hand he had been taught by the missionaries.

"DEAR SIR:

"You will be surprised to see that I do not appear. But I have appeared several times to hear the decision of the Landdrost, and also to prove that white enticed me and my men to leave our country under false pretenses. But every time my case is remanded, and so I have come to the conclusion that they want to invent some scheme to get me into trouble; and also mine is, I think, a case for Basutoland, and not for the Transvaal.

"So if they want to try me, let them try me there. If they have right on their side they will win the case; and if they do not wish to come so far, and since they are so fond of postponing the case, ask them to have the case postponed for six months, as, for the present, I am tired of waiting, and long to see my native hills again.

"And if any more whites visit these peaceable quarters, I shall know how to deal with them. And I dare say when you are reading this I shall be safe and at home, and will never come again to the Transvaal. Also not forgetting to thank you for your legal assistance, and wishing to tell all fair men that the way white is trying to make natives work will never succeed, and also wishing to be understood that I am not wishing to break the laws of the country and God, but for fear of meeting the schemes of schemers in a strange country.

"I now conclude and remain,

"Your obedient

"MAMA LETSHE MOSHESH."

The recruiting agents were not abashed by slight setbacks of this sort. When they failed to conclude satisfactory negotiations with the chiefs, they turned their attention toward individual members of the tribes. This work was more laborious and petty, but the recruiters made it worth their own while.

The broad territory of the hinterland was dotted with little

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

wooden-shack trading-stores which sold sugar and beads, colored mirrors and cheap blankets to the natives at enormous profits. These stores were owned and conducted by white men, who made it part of their business routine to practice every known form of trickery and extortion, together with a few original and indigenous schemes of their own, on their ignorant customers. To swell their coffers, already made heavy with the payments of the natives, the traders adopted the additional job of recruiting. Their formula for capture seldom varied. They offered their tawdry but expensive wares to the native on credit. They plied him with bright pink blankets and rolls of copper wire. They pressed their mirrors into his hand, and he, enchanted and fascinated by this strange glass which showed him his own face, accepted the goods without question. They offered him beads and sugar, shirts like the white man wore, and shiny black shoes made of cardboard. Not that this last factor mattered very much, for the native never wore his shoes. He trudged barefooted for miles across the stony country carrying his shoes slung round his neck. They were, to him, a precious ornament, a rare and lovely possession.

The trader's habitual scowl turned to an ingratiating smile as he handed his cheap rubbish across the counter. He waited until the native was well in debt before he demanded his money. Then his smile disappeared; he became fierce and threatening as he shouted at the customer who was once so welcome. No, the trader would not take payment in cattle or corn. He wanted gold. The native was frightened. He had no gold. He could do nothing to stem the anger and the threats of the white man. It was always at this point in the scene that the shopkeeper turned recruiter, as he leaned across the counter to tell the native in persuasive tones how he could meet his debt. When, a little later, the native left the wooden shack, he was under contract to work on the mines for the period of one year. He set out the next day to walk to the Rand. His cheap boots, the relic of an adventure which he could not appreciate, were slung round his neck. The trader was making out a memorandum to the mining company in which he credited himself with capitation fees, and gave instruc-

## BLACK BUSINESS

tions that the debt owed to him by the native must be paid direct by the company out of the man's wages.

There were other ways of exerting pressure. There were other baits, besides mirrors and beads and blankets, with which to tempt the unsuspecting black man. The tribal customs of marriage, for example, brought fruitful results to the recruiters. These customs, known as lobola, made it necessary for a young warrior to pay for his wife in cattle before marriage. The amount to be paid varied according to the demands of the girl's family. Consequently marriage presented the same problems to the black warriors of Africa as it did to the white waistcoats of Mayfair. Many men could not afford it. Here again the recruiter slipped in with offers of assistance. Lobola would be paid, the marriage would be performed with great ceremony, and the young husband would leave his home soon after to work his debt off in the mines.

Seduction was even more expensive than marriage. It was relatively as costly in the bare savage regions of the hinterland in those days as it is today in the smart precincts of Reno. There were two differences, though. Seduction was strongly disapproved of by the black man, and the co-respondent would be forced to pay heavily for his adventure not in dollars, but in cattle. The trader or recruiter would once more come to the assistance of the native with a loan which had to be repaid.

Gradually, then, the black men of South Africa were put on the path that led to the gold mines of the Rand, and slowly the simple, unsophisticated native was introduced to the ways of the white man.

The actual work of mining on the Reef was effected by the natives. It was they who hammered away ceaselessly all day at the resisting face of the rock. It was they who drilled holes and hauled the quartz to the surface. It was they who performed the heavy thankless part of the job. They were presided over on each property by a handful of white miners who did little else but stand about shouting oaths at the natives and goading them forward to greater and greater exertions. These white miners were invariably stubborn, uneducated men, for anyone with the faintest tinge of

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

shrewdness was too busy promoting companies and selling shares to consider doing any work on the mines in which they appeared so greatly interested.

The qualification, then, for the white miner, dismissing, as it did, all sign of intelligence and ambition, successfully eliminated the entire population of Johannesburg. Apart from a few Cornishmen who had come over to show the Rand the difference between a pickax and a hammer, and had remained to get rich, the white miners were drawn exclusively from the lower class of Boers. The young Dutchman who worked down a mine in the position of overseer in those early days of the Rand was a great strong creature possessing little more than bulging biceps and a marked distaste for natives. This prejudice was based on a long history of bloody conflict between the pioneer trekkers and the savage black tribes. Every Dutchman in the Transvaal had been brought up on stories of massacre and butchery, and although the battles had all been fought a long time before, the young descendants of the Transvaal pioneers kept alight the flame of hatred and suspicion against the natives, almost as a loyal duty to their forefathers.

The life of the new black recruit from the hinterland was not made easy or comfortable under conditions such as these. The savage warriors of Cetewayo, Dingaan and Tshaka had been vanquished by the small forces of the white man. They were no longer savages, but just black men who held their conquerors in awe and respect. The fierce, untamed spirit of the warrior had been curbed, and in the mines it appeared only within the legal limits of the war-dances which they performed as a kind of entertainment in their few leisure hours. Occasionally the old lust for battle would struggle and break out of the narrow confines imposed by the new order, and then one tribe of mine boys would set upon a rival clan, not with assegais, which they had left at home, but with sticks and stones; and they would fight with blood in their hearts and in their eyes.

But it was always black man against black man.

The white man was regarded by all sections as a powerful master, and was obeyed even when his orders were unjust and his

## BLACK BUSINESS

actions cruel. For the white miner was taking no chances. His superiority, he believed, must be maintained with a clenched fist and a stentorian voice of command which brooked neither question nor disobedience. Discipline. That word covered a multitude of sins. It sheltered a hundred injustices in the dark tunnels of the mines. Discipline. Those in command of the Rand believed firmly in the theory of discipline. They seldom bothered to find out how this theory was put into practice by their employees; and if, occasionally, some act of outstanding violence against a native were brought to their attention, they would merely nod thoughtfully, assure each other that such disciplinary measures must be taken if the white man was to be obeyed and the mines continue to prosper, and then they would turn their attention to the more serious business of making more profits.

It was difficult for a young native who had come straight from his kraal to the Rand to understand the ways of the white man. To begin with, he was astounded, and a little unnerved, by the strange new town of Johannesburg. He had never seen so many white skins and red necks in his life. There were great buildings of wood and even brick. There were carts drawn by horses or oxen. There were white women who covered their bodies from head to toe and wore the feathers of birds in their hats. There were men walking about the great wide streets in straw hats and trousers, blowing smoke through their mouths, and sometimes wearing round pieces of glass in front of their eyes. There was a great deal of talking which he could not understand.

The new recruit was not given much time to inspect Johannesburg, for he was sent to work down one or another of the mines almost as soon as he arrived on the Rand. His first shock came when he learned that he must enter the earth and work under the ground. But there was no turning back now, for he was herded and pushed toward the gaping hole, and once he was down in the darkness of the mine he was under the control of a white man.

The white man shouted orders at him in Dutch. The native could not understand. He tried to tell the master so, in his own tongue. The white man did not wait for an explanation. He sent

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the native sprawling in the mud with a well-aimed blow on the jaw. This new kaffir must be taught discipline. He must be taught from the beginning not to argue with the white man. More especially he must be taught not to talk in his own damned lingo, which the white man could not, and did not wish to, understand.

And so, in this fashion, the native was introduced to his new life. There were more blows, more kicks and punches for him, and gradually he was knocked into learning the art of mining. He set about his job quietly and uncomplainingly. He knew now that he must sweat in the earth like a beast in the fields. He must draw great truck-loads of rock along the tunnels like an ox. He must hammer a long piece of iron into the hard granite all day until his limbs ached with the vibration and his head spun round. He began to learn the danger of dynamite, and he came to realize that when the work was most hazardous it was he, and not the white man, who was sent to drill the face of the insecure stope. When the rock came crashing down, there was only another black body underneath. It did not matter very much.

His only light by which to work was the glimmering flame of a candle. Very often he was given short rations in candles, and when the flame died away he was forced either to finish his work in the thick darkness of the underground, or else to leave it incomplete, and thus forfeit his pay for the whole day.

He knew what it was to feel ill, to be accused of malingering and to be sent back down the hot sticky shaft. He dreamed of those lost days on his mealie patch or in his kraal as a visionary idyl. All his hours of sunlight now, from dawn to dusk and after, were spent in the murky tunnels of the mine. When at last he came up from the blackness of the earth, the sky above him was dark with night. He would be given food—ill-cooked, dirty, disagreeable food—and then, tired out with fatigue, he would sleep on the stone floor of the long tin compound, huddled close to the hundreds of other natives around him. The next day would start the same story for him again. More work, more blows, more kicks. He did not complain, for he could not understand why this should be. It was the law of the white man.

## BLACK BUSINESS

More than twenty years later, when the industry had made great strides and when the country had progressed toward a measure of civilization, the Government of South Africa appointed an official Commission to inquire into and report upon the conditions of labor of mine natives. An extract of this report dated 1913 reads:

"A complaint which is all but universal throughout the mines is that natives are frequently assaulted by Europeans, generally underground. A certain number of such cases seem inevitable when the conditions of the work are considered. The mines consist of an enormous mileage of tunnels in which a number of Europeans, many of them of no high standard of education or ethics, are each in practically unchecked control of several members of a servient race. As a rule neither the master nor the servant understands the other's language, yet the master has to give directions, and the servant to obey them. Both parties are working under unhealthy and unnatural conditions. In these circumstances the temptation to, and the opportunity for, assaults on the servant by the master are constantly present.

"It has sometimes been found difficult to secure convictions, the available evidence not being very strong. The corroboration of marks on the body is rarely obtainable in the case of habitual offenders, since these take care to strike the native where he is clothed. The complainant's evidence is, in the nature of things, exclusively native: and it is difficult to obtain the conviction of a white man on purely native evidence. Also the European often manages to persuade some of the natives working under him to support his version."

The report proceeds to deal with conditions in the compounds—conditions, it must be remembered, twenty years more advanced than those of the early days.

"In every compound [states this Commissioner of the Government] the compound manager is assisted by a number of natives who are called 'police.' They are not, of course,



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

police at all, but merely employees in the mine like the rest of the native labourers. They are, however, invested with considerable, if rather vague, powers over the remainder of the natives: and the principal policeman, known as 'the induna,' is a person of very great consequence indeed in the compound. A good many of the complaints may be put down to tribal jealousy; every tribe objects to being ordered about by another tribe. This is generally met by choosing a policeman from each tribe which is represented in the compound; but the induna must belong to one tribe or another, and his appointment will usually give dissatisfaction to all tribes but his own.

"Allowing, however, for this feeling, I have no doubt that many of the complaints against the compound police are well founded. Allegations of habitual assault are common; and although most compound managers assert that they never allow their police to touch other natives, I notice that it is the ordinary practice of such police to carry sjamboks. Of course, these may be, as I am assured, merely badges of office; but when you put an offensive weapon into the hands of a savage, I doubt whether it is easy to convince him that he carries it solely for ornamental purposes. I have also seen natives—presumably police or boss boys—going underground similarly armed, and I have failed to learn what portion of their duties requires to be performed with a sjambok."

So spoke the appointed voice of the Government, twenty years later. A young country grows out of its early habits as fast as a schoolboy grows out of his clothes. Twenty years in a new land is a long time in which to rectify the mistakes and evils of its youth, and a Government report dated 1913 giving restrained and sober evidence of ill-treatment among natives serves well as an unwritten account of the harsher, fiercer, more vindictive conditions that must have preceded it in the days when the Government was either too uneducated or too indifferent to make any awkward inquiries.

The years that marked off the last decade of the nineteenth century were swaddled in the clothes of infant intellect and childish insensitiveness. The sufferers were the black men on the

## BLACK BUSINESS

mines; they had not yet come to live in that stage of civilization where their complaints would be heard by the Government or anyone else. So they said nothing. They drew their pay each month—it amounted on an average to forty-three shillings a month—and either saved it to buy cattle, or else spent it in a strangely exciting imitation of the white man. In this way a considerable amount of the profits earned by Nellmapius out of his alcohol monopoly was made by selling liquor to natives.

The recruiting agents were busier than ever capturing natives for the expanding industry on the Rand, while in the kraals the women waited for their husbands to return and the old men shook their heads sadly.

Then came the Boer War.

The mines stopped work, and all the native employees were repatriated. The clash of Boer and Briton freed the black man from the mines, and the native kraals in the hills and on the plains were humming once more with the talk of menfolk. The stories they told of the Rand were listened to with wonderment by the women, but the old men with frizzy gray hair and short stunted beards could not conceal their disapproval. Their sons had changed. They had learned to drink strong spirits, and to gamble for money on the throwing of five stones. They had returned to their homes with the clothes of the white man. They had learned, many of them, to do without women. It was not right. They must be kept at home, now, in the arms of their tribe, in their rightful place.

The sound of gun and cannon boomed across the Transvaal as Boer and Briton fought for each other's blood. White man against white man. Out of the range of conflict, the native sat before his hut, talking to his children, as he sharpened his hunting-spear and watched his wife sow the crops and tend the cattle. He was master here. He was at home.

Then came peace. The mines were opened up again, and the demand for labor was full-throated and eager. But the natives would not go back to the Rand. Not all the wiles and temptations of the recruiting agent could persuade them. They had

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

tasted the experiment of industrial life and had found it unsavory. They had experienced the ways of the white lords. They preferred to be ruled by the laws of their tribal chief, which they knew and understood. They would not return to the Rand.

Once more the mining industry was faced with the most delicate and harassing of all its problems—the problem of securing cheap labor. This was a matter of supreme importance to the Rand, for black men made profits for the mines with their cheap bargain bodies, and profit, after all, was the only reason for the existence of the industry. There was a difference between paying forty-three shillings a month for a native, and thirty pounds a month for a white man—all the difference in the world, especially when the white miner could not be relied on to do the heavy work. Economically and industrially the gold-mining industry was in a dilemma when the native resisted its offers of a subterranean profession, ready-made and payable at the rate of a little over two pounds a month. The position grew so critical on the Rand, and competition became so keen among the mine owners to obtain black workmen, that native wages rose to fifty-six shillings a month. But even this had little effect.

A Government Commission was appointed to inquire into the question of labor in the Transvaal. Now, this Commission called evidence from men they considered “experts” in native affairs, and their suggestions were treated with attentive respect, and were noted down accurately for the future guidance of men and ministers less expert in matters of this kind. So it came to pass that a number of civilized men sat round a conference table and suggested almost casually that the complete native nation should be disintegrated, and the ageless social system of the black man should be destroyed in order to fill the mines with cheap labor. The details of destruction advocated by the gentlemen experts varied, naturally, in character, but the finding was unanimous.

Native life must be made so uncomfortable that the black man would fly to the mines for relief. He must be forced off his land, and be frozen economically out of the warmth and comfort of his own little mealie patch. He must be forced to pay taxes which

## BLACK BUSINESS

he could not possibly afford unless he worked on the Rand. He and his children must be systematically taught to desire things which they could not buy without the money of the mines. The opportunity of obtaining land must be withheld from him, and he must be moved away from the country of his ancestors, and herded into native settlements near industrial centers. The laws and traditions of the tribe must be destroyed. In short, the expert gentlemen, after a good lunch at the Rand club, and happy in the knowledge that their dividends were secure, suggested to the Government Commission that the spirit of the native races of South Africa should be broken, their pride and their beliefs should be smashed and their stomachs should be starved. Then, of course, the mines might make more profits.

Not that they said this in so many words. Remembering the dignity of their positions, they used language which might be called parliamentary to wrap up schemes which might be called civilized.

Imagine, then, the conference room, thick with the smoke of expensive cigars, and humming with talk of native labor, interspersed with whispered gossip on the latest and best mining proposition. The outcome of this heavy intellectuality is contained in a large thin book, published by the Government printer, and bound in official blue paper. It is the report of the work of this historic Commission.

“Your Commission has heard with satisfaction two suggestions which it regards as based upon sound principles, and advisable in connection with the labour supply [says the Blue book].

“The first is that additional direct taxation should be levied upon natives in order to provide for the education of their own children. This would promote higher wants and civilisation.

“The other is that some portion of a native’s hut tax should be remitted as a distinction, upon his showing that he had been a certain time absent from his home in employment. This would directly promote labour by encouragement, and this would effect more than the mere value of the remission.

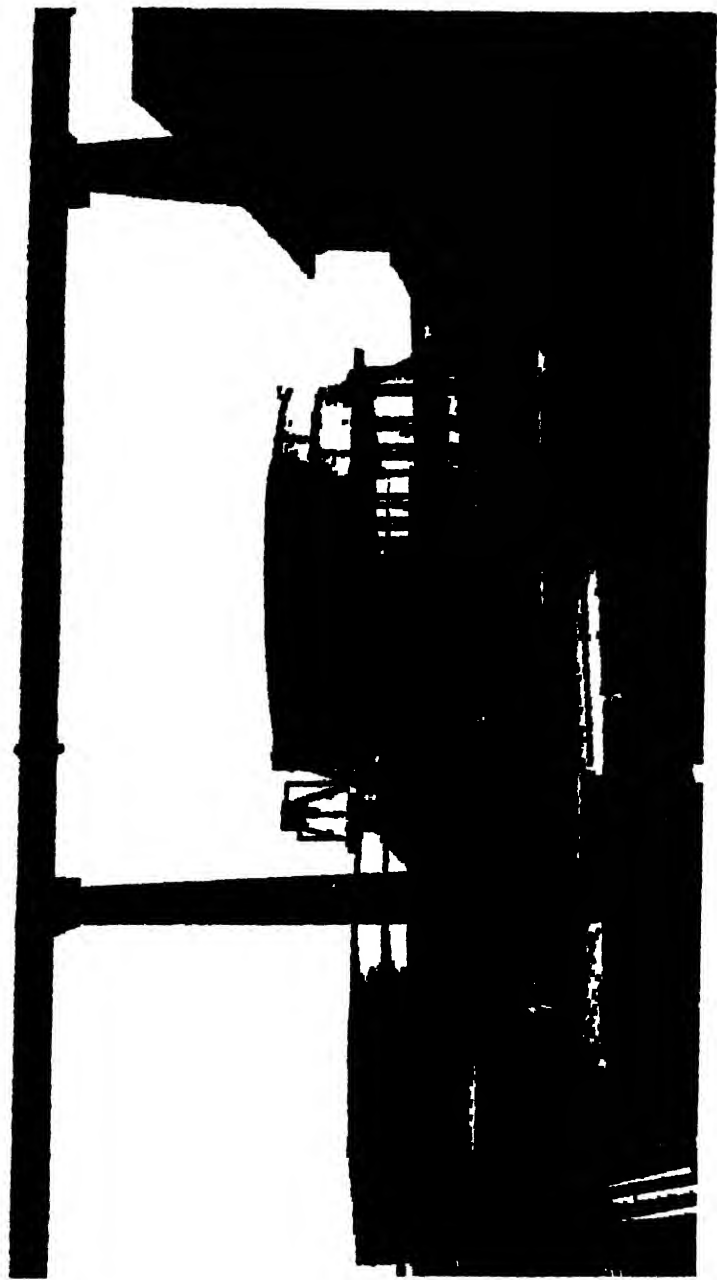
## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

"The introduction of legislation modifying the native Land-Tenure System was generally approved, mainly for the reason that, while the present facilities for obtaining land exist, the native is in a position to meet his wants and his small need for money by the sale of the produce of his land. This point was emphasised by experienced witnesses, well acquainted with the native question. The details suggested naturally differed, some witnesses supporting the maintenance of present native areas under the system of individual land tenure, while others held the view that native settlements near industrial centres should be created. Legislation of this character would no doubt have a far-reaching effect ultimately, but in order to be effective it should be generally applied throughout South Africa, and even when so applied its results upon the labour supply in the country would only become apparent after a considerable lapse of time. It is probable, however, such changes would eventually become effective and cause a number of surplus natives to seek work outside their settlements.

"Considerable difference of opinion was expressed as to the effect of the native's present tribal system upon the labour supply, some witnesses supporting the abrogation, while others held that it should be maintained on the ground that the maintenance of communal responsibility was an advantage which should be strengthened rather than weakened.

"The abolition of native locations and of native reserves like Basutoland, Swaziland, etc., and the expropriation of the land for white settlements, was also suggested as well as proposals for the distribution of the natives on the land held by white owners. The suggested creation of settlements of natives near towns, which found support at the Bloemfontein Conference, was, in the main, opposed by witnesses who gave evidence before the Commission, mainly on the ground that its consequent evils would outweigh its advantageous effect on the labour supply."

Here, fortunately, the members of the Commission itself were moved, possibly by conscience, to express an opinion which was rare for its good sense, and remarkable for its feelings of justice and the rightful balance of State matters.



**Cyanide vats at New Kleinfontein.**



## BLACK BUSINESS

"It will be seen [says the Commission] that the more weighty proposals put forward to improve the labour supply recommended that the existing native social system should be attacked with the object of modifying or destroying it. Marriage and family ties, native laws of succession, inheritance and ownership are bound up indissolubly with the existing tenure of land and native tribal system, and to weaken or destroy the existing basis of native Society clearly involves social consequences of the gravest and most far-reaching character.

"It may be said, generally, that, in our opinion, such changes should not be considered from the standpoint of their effect on the labour supply. The existing relationships between the white and black races are more important than a full supply of African labour for local industries, and modifications of these relations, the effect of which will probably be felt for generations, should be fully considered from these wider points of view before adoption. Even, however, if such changes are made, their effect upon the labour market will not be rapid, and can only be appreciably felt after a considerable interval."

The one funny thing about this austere Commission was that under its terms of reference it was called upon only to report on the amount of labor available to the industry. On the last page it found that the supply available was inadequate.

But the mills of a Government Commission, like the mills of God, grind slowly, and in the meantime the labor crisis in the mining industry had reached dangerous proportions. In desperation the Rand decided that, as it could not obtain black workmen from Africa, it must get brown, yellow or white workmen from somewhere else. The only qualification, of course, was that they should be cheap. After casting about in Italy, Germany, India and other countries, it was finally decided that a contract be entered into with China for the supply of labor to the Rand.

Accordingly, in June, 1904, the first batch of Chinese laborers arrived in the Transvaal, and their disappearance down the black shafts of the Rand mines was a signal for a furious outburst of protest from all over the world. English politicians promised their



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

electors to have this Chinese slavery abolished. South Africa shouted hoarsely against the Yellow Peril, and gave vivid and disturbing pictures of the probable fate of all white men at the hands of such sinister Orientals.

The Chinamen went imperturbably to work. Altogether there were about sixty thousand of them shipped to South Africa over a period of three years. They came mostly from the starved, poverty-stricken areas of Northern China. They were tall, well-built, silent men with a surprising aptitude for learning the job of mining, and an eager, almost pathetic desire to be efficient and make good. So strenuously and intelligently did they apply themselves to their work that the value of the gold output of the mines increased during their employment from a little over twelve million pounds to more than twenty-nine million pounds a year.

Johannesburg became even more hybrid and cosmopolitan in its peoples as the soft-slipped feet of the Chinese pattered along the streets and their high-pitched, singing voices grew shrill with wonderment and incredulity at the displayed shop wares brought, after a lifetime of destitution, within their means.

But, apart altogether from the political propaganda of British Liberals, and the nervous, querulous complaints of the South African white population, the graver, less hysterical side of South Africa saw in the Chinese immigrants another and more serious danger than the hypothetical flashing of an Oriental dagger.

The problem that presented itself through the yellow screen of labor satisfaction was the problem of insuring white supremacy. There were already eight million black men in the country, which in itself was a numerical advantage not to be forgotten. But the distribution of races was further complicated by the enormous population of Indians imported into the cane-fields of Natal. It seemed almost suicidal for a handful of white men purposely to surround themselves not only with savage black men and shrewd brown men, but also with quick-breeding, intelligent yellow men. Even the opposition of the mining industry, which had grown weighty with profits, could not cancel out the desire to keep the country's problems as simplified and clearly defined as possible.

## BLACK BUSINESS

South Africa could not take the risk of harboring this dangerous triangle of color. The natives were the natural people of the country, and could not be turned out. The Indians had been specially imported and deposited in Natal to work the sugar-fields, and it was too late now to remove them. The Chinamen must go. And so the Government ordered the repatriation of the Chinese laborers. The crowded ships that brought them, happy and elated at the prospect of work on the Rand, took back heavy cargoes of dejected and unhappy people. The last of them left in 1910, and the "Yellow Peril" was thus removed from the shores of the country.

This left the mining industry back in its old position of having to rely upon the native. The balance of power, however, had changed very considerably by this time. The separate States of the country had been amalgamated in 1909 into the Union of South Africa, with a Central Parliament to conduct the affairs of a joint nation. The richest of the four provinces in the new Union was the Transvaal, and the richness of the Transvaal was due absolutely and entirely to the gold-mining industry. The Rand was now in a strong financial position. It was employing hundreds of thousands of people, buying enormous quantities of stores and machinery, and entirely supporting the town of Johannesburg. On the birth of the Union, the Transvaal was unostentatiously expected to balance any deficits incurred by the other three provinces, to keep the Treasury healthy, and the farmers who formed the vast majority of electors as quiet as South African farmers can be kept—which, at the best of times, is noisy.

The voice of the mining industry was treated with the respect accorded to a wealthy and irascible man by his less fortunate but still hopeful colleagues, and when the Rand demanded that its labor requirements should be attended to, the demand was heard with no small measure of attention by the Union Government.

It is, perhaps, difficult to say whether the Natives Land Act of 1913 was the direct outcome of the proposals embodied in the incredibly vulgar Report of that earlier Commission of 1906. But when that evidence is remembered, it requires no straining of

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the imagination to find a relationship, so strong as to resemble that of parent and child, between the original suggestion and the eventual enactment. The work of the 1906 Commission seems, after all, to have been useful to someone.

The Natives Land Act of 1913 has been described many times by bold historians and sincere negrophilists as the most potent evil in the entire social structure of South Africa. It is regarded by those few people who do not retain the vivid dislike of the black man, inherited from the early days, that flourishing relic of the master-above-slave attitude so briefly and pleasantly known as the "Color Bar," as the worst piece of legislation ever introduced in a country rich in experimental mistakes. But bold historians are rare, sincere negrophilists are shunned as Communists, and the people who do not carry the badge of Color Bar are as scarce as the people of Italy who do not carry a badge of Fascism. The Natives Land Act prospers.

This law prohibited the natives from buying or renting any land in the country other than that set apart in specially reserved areas. This, when put into effect, meant that a large number of natives were ejected from the lands they occupied and were forced to settle in prescribed areas. It was more serious to the native than the white man cared to imagine. This law prohibiting him from buying or renting land in the great wild country of his ancestors filled the native with superstitious horror. He believed that his place was on that land in which the bones of his father and his forefathers lay buried. He believed that if he moved away from his proper home the spirits of his ancestors would wreak terrible vengeance, and would call down on his head drought, flood, disease and death. He believed that he was tied spiritually and pinned by the soul to the earth he had known.

But with slow inevitability the Act of 1913 forced its way into the lives of the native people. They were ejected from lands which they regarded as their own, and were made to occupy defined areas. Some of these reserves were barren and as unfruitful as the desert. Others were malarial and swampy. The fertile districts set aside became overcrowded with natives seeking some way to

## BLACK BUSINESS

grow enough food for their needs. The Government hut tax pressed heavily upon these poor silent people. They had not the money to pay. They could not grow produce to meet their account. In Johannesburg there was a jail for defaulters. There were the gold mines in Johannesburg, too. These were their alternatives. This was their choice. They chose the mines. Once more their bare feet wore down curving tracks through the veldt and over the mountains as they marched to the Rand, without protest, without complaint. The stream of laborers poured into the mines. The iron stamps threshed the gold out of the rock with renewed activity. The monthly returns were highly satisfactory.

The organization of native labor on the Rand today is as well-oiled and smooth-running as any other piece of mining machinery. It is conducted with efficiency under the powerful auspices of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, and the bad old days of indifference verging upon inhumanity which marked the end of last century and the beginning of this century have disappeared forever.

The subject of native labor is still rather a delicate topic of conversation, though, in the sanctuaries of the mining world, for so much misrepresentation has been made in Europe, mostly by well-meaning tourists who passed hurriedly through the Rand on their way to Victoria Falls, that the industry is loath to discuss lightly a situation which they have done their best to place above suspicion.

No one, not even a Rand economist taken off his guard, will admit that the system at present in force is perfect. No one can argue that it is in the best traditions of sociology to import three hundred thousand workmen into an industry, and to shut all these grown men together in compounds where they must live and sleep in close intimacy for a year or eighteen months. Such methods do not offer the best opportunities for normal behavior to the average man.

But with the rotten foundations planted by an earlier and less thoughtful generation, the mining industry of today has built a

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

remarkably satisfactory structure. Satisfaction today, however, may lead to controversy and disruptions tomorrow, and the labor structure of the Rand mines cannot, or at least should not, be thought stable and permanent. The "higher wants" and "civilisation" discussed so glibly in that 1906 report have been gradually inoculated into the black man during the last thirty years. The rush mat and loin-cloth that once satisfied him completely are not enough now. He wants trousers like those worn by Tom Mix, and a wrist-watch like that of his boss. Tomorrow he will want a four-poster bed and a motor-car. He is an apt mimic of his master. He is encouraged to spend his money, for this is good for the trade of the country. But it is dangerous to urge a man forward along a pleasant, shop-lined avenue, only to meet him half-way and order him back into the side streets. It is dangerous to introduce higher wants into a man, only to withhold from him the power of realizing them.

The native mine worker of the Rand has behind him fifty years of the white man's civilization. Around him there are all the vices and temptations of urban environment—temptations which are doubly interesting and exciting to a race of people eager, curious, anxious to sample every one of the wares of the white man, a race just emerging from the shadows—or the sunlight—of ignorance and unsophistication. The metamorphosis of the black man on the Rand has been gradual, but great. The only thing in his world of change which has remained stable is his wages. These have varied little during the last thirty years. Today the native mine worker earns about fifty-six shillings and seven pence a month. Apparently it is enough for his wants now. But will it always be? When, under the able tuition of the white man, he has become still more civilized, will he remain satisfied?

The native worker is as vitally important to the gold mines as he ever was. The industry applies itself conscientiously to maintaining this delicate piece of machinery in order. Unless, however, it has some secret plan up its sleeve, the Rand does not seem to have made any provision for the future of this great black nation which it has brought down from the hills into the under-

## BLACK BUSINESS

ground tunnels of the earth and the four walls of the compounds. The industry appears content to live in a well-organized present. There have appeared no signs of planning for the future. Only the future can tell whether this is a mistake.

Today the recruitment of natives is divided between two official bodies under the control of the Chamber of Mines. The Native Recruiting Corporation is responsible for South African natives, while the Witwatersrand Native Labor Association handles the supply from the Portuguese territory of Mozambique, with which Government the Union of South Africa has made a labor contract for the supply of not more than eighty thousand natives. Recruitment is conducted along orthodox lines, for any irregularity at all would be pounced upon by angry critics and denounced from the roof-tops of the world. Before being engaged at their homes the natives are medically examined, and the terms of their contract are explained to them by the magistrate of the district. They still have no alternative but to work in the mines, for the native reserves cannot support the black races without the money of the Rand.

"The country," it is stated officially, "cannot from its own reserve support all its inhabitants, the greater bulk of whom are peasants with small holdings. It may be taken as a fact that at any given moment nearly half the able-bodied men whose permanent home is in these territories are earning the money for the support of their families in areas outside the territories."

On arrival in Johannesburg the natives are accommodated in a great clearing-house, before being allocated to individual mining companies, whose property they remain for the term of their contract. This is usually about eighteen months, and at the end of this time the native is free to return to his kraal until he is forced by economic necessity to become a mine laborer again.

Those visitors to the Rand who are interested in the work of the mining industry are usually conducted round the compounds at Crown Mines, because these are the show compounds of the Reef. Other mines are given less publicity in this direction, because they have some distance to go before reaching the standard

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

of modernity, hygiene and cleanliness set by Crown Mines.

Every native mine worker on the Rand is given free board and lodging. Before going on shift at about five o'clock in the morning he is offered either coffee or gruel, and sausage. But as a rule he is unwilling to eat at this time of the day, and is content to take a small square of bread underground with him. He has no more to eat until he returns to the compound at about five o'clock in the afternoon after a hard day's work. Then he is given his evening meal. At Crown Mines this consists of six pints of Marewu, which is a sort of gruel made from fermented meal; a ration of hard porridge; beans and mealies mixed together, and stewed meat with vegetables introduced surreptitiously, for he does not care for greenstuffs.

Three times a week he is given one pound of raw meat to cook in his room in any manner he chooses. Three times a week he is given a ration of monkey nuts and two pints of kaffir beer, made from kaffir corn malt and containing about two and one-fourth per cent alcohol. He is also provided with Fanko, which is made from crushed white mealies, and somewhat resembles rice.

At Crown Mines, where this system of feeding is in force, there are twenty-four thousand natives employed and housed. They are lodged in six great brick compounds, adjoining the different shaft-heads. Each tribe is separated in the compounds in order to eliminate, as far as possible, the danger of tribal fights which usually, once started, assume serious proportions. The mine laborer sleeps on a cement bunk in a small room with nine other natives. Apart from a small paraffin stove there is no furniture. It is not difficult in the compound to distinguish the sleeping accommodation of the new recruit from that of the old and tried worker, for the bunk of the latest arrival is always upholstered with his own personal pieces of rag and cloth, while the more experienced man has hastily indulged himself in the luxury of buying a cheap mattress made, usually, from paper. The rooms are built in a square on the edge of a bare cemented rectangle. This is the playground of the black men. It is here that they squat on their haunches in their few leisure hours, combing one

## BLACK BUSINESS

another's hair, patching trousers, gossiping and singing their rhythmic native melodies. Crown Mines is an example set by enterprising teachers to a class which does its homework slowly and laboriously, and lags stolidly behind. It is a lesson which the whole Reef would do well to learn.

There is a cinema show once a week for the Crown Mines employees, and these great strong black men go into rhapsodies of native delight at any actor approaching the standards of Carnera, Al Capone, Hoot Gibson, or King Kong. They are just as noisy in expressing their disapproval of the slick bedroom comedies and witty sex situations which left the Hollywood studios many years back, but have only now filtered down to an audience of native mine workers.

Elaborate wireless apparatus and loud-speakers are installed in the compounds, and Sir Thomas Beecham, relayed with other records from the manager's office, at last receives the quiet attention he begs. The radio is also used to deliver talks on first-aid, hygiene and safety-first measures to be employed in the mine.

Each underground worker is supplied with a free tunic and a pair of puttees, to prevent the occurrence of diseases such as tetanus and blood poisoning which arise from the many cuts and abrasions received during mining operations. At the end of the day, when the natives return from work, all those who have sustained any sort of minor injury are made to report for treatment, and at evening dozens of crushed fingers, cuts and gashes are lined up for a dab of iodine and a piece of sticking-plaster in the little office at the entrance to the compound. Serious accident cases are removed to a hospital at the expense of the industry.

It is essential for the mine worker to wear boots underground, and the native is obliged to buy these from the mines at a cost of thirteen shillings and two pence a pair. When he is first recruited from the outlying districts, the native is given an advance payment of about two pounds, which money he usually leaves at home with his family. His rail fare to Johannesburg and the cost of his boots are debited to him, and these loans, including the advance, must be paid as soon as possible from his wages. How-



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

ever, it is laid down that he must draw a minimum of ten shillings a month until his debts are liquidated. At Crown Mines the system of deferred pay is in force which provides that thirty shillings a month from the wages of each native shall be paid to the magistrate of his particular district to be collected by his family.

When the day's work is done, the native is permitted by the mine authorities to leave the compound when he has obtained a pass from the office. This pass is issued by Government regulation to all natives to cover the period from ten P.M. to four A.M., and must be produced on request of the police. But he is too tired, as a rule, to walk into town, and he cannot ride in the buses or trams.

So with the fall of night he turns gratefully to his cement bunk.

He is a long way from home, but it does not matter so much now, for he is protected and cared for by an industry which has, with the passing of the years, found a heart as well as a brain.

## CHAPTER VII

### WHITE HEAT

BLACK WAS NOT THE ONLY COLOR THAT STOOD FOR ANXIETY IN THE mines in the first part of this century. White was to prove far more dangerous as the emblem of upraised arm, loaded gun—revolution.

Up to the time of the Great War, the white miners of the Witwatersrand were, in the main, a peaceful band of workers. The early ignorant miner had been replaced by a laborer more conscious of his job, more skilled in its performance and less arrogant in his general attitude. Until the formation of Trades Unions and similar protective societies, the white miner of the Rand was content to complete his sheet, draw his wage and let the devil take the hindmost. But when the objects and ambitions of Trades Unionism were preached, he began to realize that his position as a solitary, lone worker in a vast powerful industry was insecure, subject to the control of unseen, unapproachable authorities, and worthless without the power that an organized body of workers could wield. He became a sincere believer in the policy of protection, and a rapid convert to the legitimate ranks of Trades Unionism.

It was in 1913 that this organized policy of protection was first put to a real test.

The trouble all arose about three hours and five men.

On the Kleinfontein Mine the underground mechanics had always worked from half-past seven in the morning till half-past three on weekdays, and from half-past seven to half-past twelve on Saturdays. When Bulman was appointed manager of the mine, he decided to alter these conditions, and proposed that the hours of work for the mechanics should be the same as those for all miners. Accordingly he gave instructions that the five mechanics of the mine should work until half-past three every

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

afternoon, including Saturdays, without extra pay. His contention was that as the mechanics were in charge of the different working gears, they should be on duty while the gears were running.

The five men concerned, however, insisted on a half-holiday on Saturday, and would not agree to the change.

They were discharged.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers interested itself in this controversy, and a notice was posted at the Kleinfontein Mine that no member of the Association was to descend the mine until further notice. Then followed a long series of interviews between the workers' representatives and the mine authorities. The conversations were friendly and amicable, and there was no hint of any real trouble. The notice of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers posted at the mine was taken down, and genuine endeavors were made to find a way out of the difficulty. Mr. Bulman thought that on Saturday the men might all start work earlier and knock off earlier, so that a shift of eight hours could be completed every day of the week.

A ballot of the underground men was taken, and by a majority of four votes it was resolved that Bulman's suggestion should be adopted, and that work on Saturday morning should begin earlier. But Bulman, for some reason, decided that the voting majority was not large enough to justify a change, and he declared his intention of adhering to his original proposal that work should be continued until half-past three on Saturdays. Quite naturally, this did not satisfy the five men or their representatives. A further ballot was taken, and this resulted in a resolution to strike. All the men on the Kleinfontein Mine left their work, and operations came to a complete standstill.

Now, Bulman had made a constitutional mistake. In declaring the immediate imposition of an extra three hours' work on Saturday, he had transgressed a section of the Industrial Disputes Act, as he had not given the required month's notice of a change in the hours of work. When his attention was drawn to this fact, he hastily tried to rectify his error by posting a notice giving a

## WHITE HEAT

month's warning of his intention to make all employees work until half-past three on Saturday.

The miners were still out on strike.

Within two or three days the Minister of Mines had come to hear of the dispute, and he telegraphed to the Kleinfontein management, advising them to withdraw the notice, and yield the original point to the workers. This, the telegram said, would deprive the men of their excuse to remain on strike. It should be explained to the management, the Minister of Mines added, that owing to their illegal and precipitate action industrial peace throughout the industry was endangered, and the moral responsibility for this situation rested with the Company.

The Kleinfontein Company knew that they had made a mistake. But again they acted in a very extraordinary manner. They ignored the men and their Society, and addressed a letter instead to the deputy-mayor of Benoni and the local press admitting their error, and stating that the management was prepared to revert to the hours that were in force before the dispute arose. They offered, in this letter, to reinstate all their employees, and undertook to see that there would be no victimization.

The Strike Committee—naturally enough again—were angry at the procedure of the management, and when, at last, overtures for a settlement of the controversy were made direct to them, these were scornfully rejected.

The miners were now filled with resentment at the behavior of the Kleinfontein Company, and they increased their demands. First, they insisted on the abolition of all Saturday afternoon work. Then they demanded the instant introduction of an Eight Hours Bill. By adopting this course, they converted what was purely a domestic quarrel into a political issue. The Kleinfontein Company had no power, whatever, to pass an Eight Hours Bill. This was Government business, and the miners were well aware of it.

However, the Kleinfontein Company proceeded to make its third blunder. The Mining Authorities refused to see any representatives of the Strike Committee, or the Trades Union, other than the mine's own employees. The company's argument was

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

that the dispute was a personal quarrel between the mine management and its men, and that they could not allow a third party to interfere between them and their servants. This actually was nonsense, for the Kleinfontein Company was not independent of the Chamber of Mines, and could never act in a dispute of this kind without taking into consideration all the mining companies along the Reef. A quarrel between Kleinfontein and its employees was a quarrel between the Kleinfontein miners and the Witwatersrand industry as a whole.

In reply to the argument put forward by the management against receiving a deputation from the Strike Committee, the workers firmly maintained that they should be represented by independent men who need neither fear nor fawn upon the directorate or the management of the mine.

Here was deadlock. Here was the reason why the Kleinfontein Strike could never be settled peacefully.

The Minister of Mines declared that the Government must remain absolutely impartial, and that it could not express any opinion on the Kleinfontein affair. The Minister reiterated that as the company, by its initial tactlessness, had caused the trouble, it was for them to settle the dispute in the best possible manner. He thought that, in this instance, the company's directors should meet the employees, accompanied by any persons elected by the workers, whether or not they were Trades Union officials. The company, he suggested, could well regard such delegates as representatives of the men, and not as representatives of the Trades Unions.

In the meantime, the miners, made still more angry by the knowledge that they were right, waited for the next move. It came from the company. A notice was posted directed to the workers on the mine-head by the management. This stated that the company was willing to reinstate every man who had come out on strike or had been discharged in connection with the dispute; the mine would revert to the old Saturday hours for underground mechanics; provided the full shift of eight hours was worked, the company would allow the men to finish earlier on

## WHITE HEAT

Saturday if the majority wished; the company would only meet representatives of the employees; there would be no victimization.

The notice concluded with the information that those miners who did not return to work within five days would not be taken on again.

This declaration by the company was taken by the miners as an ultimatum to return to the old conditions within five days or be locked out while new men filled their jobs. No man—not even a miner—likes to be threatened, and when he has stood out for what he considered his rights, he is unwilling to forgo his principles and meekly follow in the backwash of a warning.

The men of Kleinfontein decided by an overwhelming majority to disregard the ultimatum and to remain on strike. Events marched quickly now. The strikers were paid off by the mine and fresh men were introduced to continue working operations.

The dispute had entered upon a new phase. It was a trial of strength between the company and its former employees. As the Kleinfontein action was now guided by the combination of mining houses along the Reef, the strikers could not hope to win their battle unless they could bring about a general strike. Isolated action, they knew, would be counteracted by the authorities through the employment of scabs, and they themselves would not only suffer a political defeat, but would be left ingloriously to overcome unemployment.

There was no way back now. There must be a general strike. They started by inciting the men on the Van Ryn Mine to come out. Up till this time the strikers had been good-humored but determined in their actions. Now, however, they began to use every effort to hamper the industry. Natives were incited to strike, and were persuaded to demand more money and less work. If, the black men were warned, they dared to work in the mines with the strike-breakers, they would be blown up with dynamite. But it took a long time to persuade the natives to challenge the authority of the white man, and it was not until long after the story of Kleinfontein had been ended that the natives in many mine compounds found courage to follow the advice of the strikers. Then they

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

refused to work without an increase in wages. Then they disregarded orders and prepared themselves for a stand-up fight with the police. Mounted men were called in, but this did not frighten them. It was not until a company of soldiers attacked the natives with fixed bayonets that they were quelled. They went back to work quietly after this, and the Rand was delivered from its most horrid dread—a massed native rising.

In the meantime, at Kleinfontein, the strikers held meetings continuously, and under the influence of inflammatory talk the tempers of the men were fanned into flames. Acts of petty violence constantly took place, and the magistrate at the mining village of Benoni issued a proclamation at the request of the police prohibiting assemblies of more than six people in the streets and public squares. Despite this proclamation a large meeting of strikers was called for the purpose of inducing a general strike right along the Reef. When the meeting had ended, bands of strikers marched from mine to mine pulling out the workers by force, and leaving the properties abandoned. Then a monster meeting was called for, to take place on the Market Square of Johannesburg, partly to celebrate this event, and partly to incite all workers of the Rand to a general strike.

At the appointed day several hundred people collected at the Square, and the police were present in large numbers to prevent disorder. This annoyed the mob, who began to stone the police and pelt them with broken bottles, sticks and iron bars. Their aim was good. Several members of the force were severely wounded.

The order was given, and the crowd was charged. They melted away before the rearing hoofs of the horses and the slashing batons of the uniformed riders. But as the Market Square emptied, so the Central Railway Station filled. The mob had swarmed in their hundreds on to the platforms with the single object of destroying the trains. Several of the crowd were armed with revolvers, and those who had no guns had hastily equipped themselves with the nearest and heaviest weapons. After cutting open mail-bags, letting loose post-office horses, and stoning the police

## WHITE HEAT

again, the mob set light to the station, and happily watched it burn to the ground. On they went, then, to the offices of the *Star* newspaper, gathering on their way all the hooligans and ruffians of the town. They sent a myriad of *Stars* up in a sheet of flame, and when the fire was impossible to subdue, they continued their frenzied career along the streets toward Corner House, the offices of Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company. Here they met with armed opposition from the police, but they put up a spirited defense with the revolvers and rifles they had looted from adjacent gunsmiths.

When they tired of Corner House and police opposition, they poured in a great mass toward the Rand Club, the prosperous background of the town's most important business men and mining magnates. Here again the police made a firm stand, but the strikers hid in doorways and alleyways, and kept up a steady sniping attack across the main streets of Johannesburg. This went on for a long time.

Then suddenly a man detached himself from the mob. He came out into the open road and dared the police in a loud voice to fire at him. They would not do it. They dared not do it. A roar of insults and jeers against the law went up from the crowd. The police were silent. The tall figure of the striker strode on across the empty street. He took off his coat. He shouted his challenge again. The crowd hissed and giped. The law dared not fire. On walked the solitary figure—on toward the police. Once more he shouted his challenge.

"Shoot, you cowards!"

There was silence.

It was broken when a single bullet screeched through the air. For an instant the striker stood motionless. Then he fell in a huddled heap in the road.

The mob were strangely quiet. They pressed back away from the body of the dead man. They were shocked and horrified; they were made aware of their position. A whispered conference in the ranks of the crowd, a white flag waved over the breathless figure in the still dark street, and the strike was over.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

This, then, was the prelude. This was the curtain-raiser that ushered in the principal play on the bill. It proved to be drama.

The interval between curtain-raiser and play seems long, but is brief in the theater of grease-paint, lines and dummy teapots. The interval on the moving stage of ordinary actors and everyday plots seems brief, but is long.

It was eight years before the curtain went up again on the Rand.

For some years after the European War the growth of unrest among the white miners of the Witwatersrand had spread like cancer. Before and during the war there had been a great exodus of skilled workers from the gold mines. They had dropped their drills to take up bayonets; they had discarded their dirty overalls for the decorous and proud uniform of khaki. They fought now for other men's blood, and not for their own rights. Principles were left lying in the mud and slush at the bottom of the mines, as the workers marched away to the sound of patriotic cheering.

The empty places they left on the Reef were filled by young South Africans, most of whom came in response to the call of the industry from the outlying half-forgotten districts of the country. These young men were untaught and untrained. They had been brought up on dusty derelict farms, and had been glad enough to earn a few shillings when the rains were good and the crops, untouched by locust or drought, had been left standing. The salaries they were offered by the mines were far in excess of any money they had ever handled, and to such men the sudden acquisition of this wealth was more heady than absinthe.

They all became members of a Trades Union, for the ritual and power of such organizations were as exciting to the young backvelder as the Ku Klux Klan. Trades Unionism was to him a toy pistol which he grasped eagerly without waiting to inquire how it worked. He imagined that he had only to point his pistol at the heads of his employers to bring them to surrender. Thus armed, he was master of the situation.

The mining industry was not only amiable and tolerant, but it

## WHITE HEAT

accorded the Trades Unions the fullest recognition and support. The industry was unwilling to employ any man who was not a member of some such society, and it went to the length of assisting the Trades Unions by deducting the subscriptions of its employees from the mine pay-sheets. And as long as the economic position of the industry made it possible for the owners to accede to the requests of the workers, they gave in to all demands. They were naturally anxious to avoid any controversy which would put a stop to mining operations, for this was a very costly business; and they were careful to prevent, as long as they could, the chaos of a strike.

So the Trades Unions grew in power and importance. Elaborate machinery was devised to obtain as much control as possible over the employers, and the bandit tastes of the young members were pandered to by the election of officers with high-sounding names and ranks. This, for a while, made the game interesting for the lusty young laborers. Then they grew tired and wanted fresh excitement. The toy pistol was charged with paper pellets. They wanted real bullets. The moderate Trades Unionist, with his conscientious regard for constitutional measures, was regarded as a bore. The extremist who shouted bravely, and a little madly, was a great success.

The mining industry continued to give way.

But with the coming of the European War the economic position of the gold mines of the Rand, in common with all other industries, changed very considerably. Before the war the mines had been in a healthy financial position. They were covering their heavy costs of production, and they were practically all making a profit. The universal disturbance of prices, however, had a most injurious effect upon the gold mines. Costs of production rose sharply, but the selling price of their product, the price of gold, remained stationary for nearly five years after the outbreak of the war. In 1920 the price of gold increased to one hundred and thirty shillings; then, after fluctuating, it began to fall again. On the other hand, the costs of mining a ton of ore had risen by more than thirty-nine per cent between 1913 and 1921.

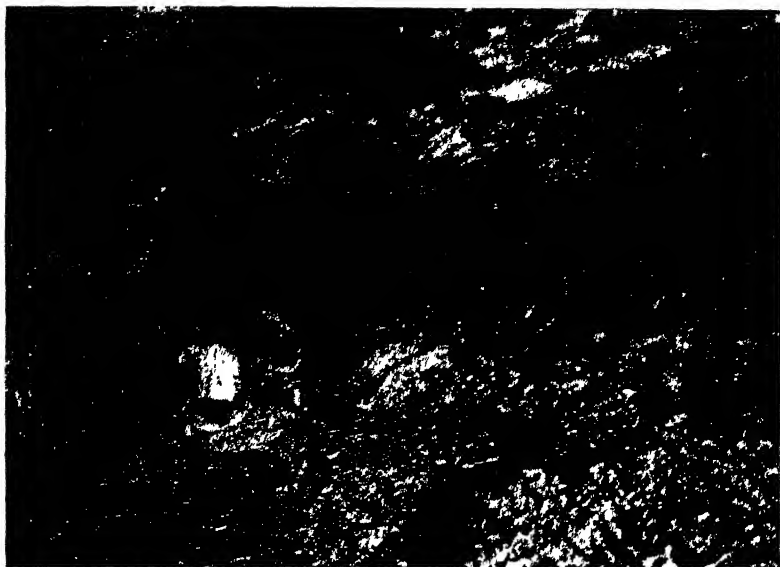
## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Now, gold does not, as is commonly supposed, occur in the Rand in great heavy nuggets and rich thick veins. It is scattered through the rock as finely and sparingly as talc powder on a bathroom floor. The Witwatersrand is a low-grade industry. Six or eight pennyweights of gold in a ton of rock was a good average yield. Sometimes the returns were higher, sometimes lower. But the industry made its profits, not like an exclusive Bond Street jeweler, but by using the old formula of mass-production. It could only hope to show a profit by crushing hundreds and hundreds of tons of rock a day. When, however, it cost twenty-three shillings to crush one ton of rock which yielded twenty-eight shillings worth of gold, the margin of safety was small, and could be afforded only by the richer properties. The poorer mines with many tons of barren rock and a very sparse ore content in their gold-bearing reef were at the mercy of working costs, and when in 1921 the price of crushing one ton of ore rose to twenty-six shillings, seven mines—Luipaardsvlei Estate, Geldenhuis Deep, Durban Roodepoort Deep, New Goch Gold Mines, Randfontein Central, Village Deep, and Simmer and Jack—were all producing their gold at a loss. The threatened further fall in the price of gold menaced the lives of twenty-four other mines, and only seventeen companies were able to face a trembling survival.

There could be but two forms of relief—an increase in the price of gold, or a decrease in the costs of production. Since the price of gold was dependent upon economic circumstances which could not be controlled, the mines realized that, in order to survive, they must decrease costs of production.

Accordingly, in November, 1921, they proposed the introduction of three economy measures to the South African Industrial Federation. First, they suggested altering the then existing contract system; secondly, they proposed a reorganization of underground work; and thirdly, they advocated the modification of the *status quo* agreement.

Under the contract system miners sometimes earned as much as two hundred pounds a month. The rearrangement of underground work was merely an attempt to secure greater efficiency



Drilling into the clearly defined gold reef thousands of feet below the surface at Modderfontein "B."



They have less than eighteen inches in which to work their eight-hour shift in this section of Van Ryn Deep.



## WHITE HEAT

from both white and black labor forces. But it was the *status quo* agreement and its suggested alteration that caused the trouble. This agreement had been made as a temporary measure three years earlier. At the time it was negotiated certain work—for example, drill sharpening—was on some mines conducted by white men, and on other mines by natives. The Mine Workers' Union had demanded that the natives employed on drill sharpening be dismissed, and their places filled by white men. The Chamber of Mines had refused to agree to this, and it was arranged that, for the time, the jobs held by colored employees should be continued to be so held. That is to say, if a native were employed on drill sharpening, or other work, the Unions could not claim that this work should be done by a white man, and, conversely, if a white man were at that time employed in the adjoining mine on drill sharpening or other work, the mine could not claim that it should be done by a colored man.

The arrangement had been interpreted by the Trades Unions to mean that if, for example, two separate gangs of natives, each under the charge of a separate native boss-boy, were each also under the nominal supervision of a white man, the industry was debarred from dismissing one of the white men and placing both gangs under the supervision of the other.

The attitude of the Chamber of Mines was that the industry was being prevented from discharging superfluous and redundant workers.

This, then, was the position when the mines made their proposals to the Industrial Federation.

It marked the beginning of a series of events which not only nearly wrecked the life of the Rand, but narrowly missed altering the entire course of South African history.

On receiving the economy suggestions of the Chamber of Mines, the workers began a furious campaign against the industry. The rebel leaders of the Trades Unions told crowded meetings of young members that the proposals of the industry constituted a veiled attempt to substitute cheap black labor for white. Nothing could have been more effective than the waving of this black flag

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

before the red bull. The miners, snorting with rage, stamped their defiance of the mine owners, and bellowed their support of the extremist's policy of a White South Africa. The imagined indignity and humiliation of a black survival rocked the workers with a passionate anger, which spread among the people as fast as any unleashed spirit of revolt. Trades Union leaders, carried far from the safety of the shore on waves of eloquence and aggression, beckoned to the workers to follow, and they waded far out of their depth into the warm seas of revolution.

Soon every miner on the Rand had joined the surge of aggression. Meetings held night after night purposely fed the feelings of the miners, and the speeches woven round the shadowy form of the black man and the ogre outline of the mine owners were uncurbed and quite unrestrained. Big processions of workers marched through the streets of Johannesburg demanding by placard and banner that South Africa be kept for the white man. Woman and children helped their menfolk, and the public places were filled with falling insults.

The negotiations which had started between the Chamber of Mines and the Trades Unions became more and more bitter. The meetings of workmen continued. The speeches spun up into a crescendo of antagonism. The frocked figure of the Church entered the crowded halls to lend moral and religious encouragement to the theme of revolution.

"The Government is only prepared to do what the Chamber of Mines tells them," said one reverend gentleman on the steps of the Town Hall.

"In order to fill their pockets, the Chamber of Mines are murdering the workers; if the Color Bar is abolished, the souls as well as the bodies of the workers will be murdered, and the authority of the white race in South Africa will come to an end."

Young workers who had never before tasted the blood of real battle hungrily swallowed these and other revolutionary meats. Their older comrades who had returned from the Great War lusted again for action, and for the opportunity to display their experience and knowledge.

## WHITE HEAT

The majority of the miners were Dutchmen or Afrikanders, and these men were hysterical in their denunciation of the Government, for the South African Party, largely representing the English-speaking classes and led by General Smuts, was in power at the time. They spat at the name of the Chamber of Mines, and were encouraged fully in this attitude by their leaders. And so, imperceptibly, the movement which had started purely as an industrial disturbance was appropriated by scheming men with political ambitions, and was subtly molded into a revolutionary uprising to overthrow and conquer the country in order to form a Dutch Republic.

The agitators were openly encouraged by Parliamentary members of the opposition, and by Afrikanders all over the country, who were anxious to see Smuts and his Government completely routed and a Republic established. The mass of mine laborers was being used now as a fiery brand to light the way to a political and bloody revolution, but they in their hysteria hardly realized what was happening. They had almost forgotten the *status quo* agreement. They were overwhelmed by the bigger target of Capitalism, and they welcomed into their army any man who expressed a fierce hatred of the ruling classes.

The ranks were swollen and the list of leaders augmented by the introduction into the movement of Communists, working, it seems, under direct instructions from Soviet Russia. The object of these Communists was to seize upon the ready-made weapon at their hands in order to bring about an armed uprising of the natives, abolish the Color Bar and inaugurate a workers' revolution for the establishment of a Soviet Republic.

Thus the same miners who had marched through the streets demanding a White South Africa, now attended the meetings presided over by Communistic native champions, and applauded their new comrades vociferously. Any man who wanted to overthrow the Government and destroy the capitalists was a comrade and a friend, no matter what method of procedure he proposed. The Communist Party of South Africa, true to the doctrines of the Third International, prepared to bring within their fold the great



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

black hordes of oppressed people. They fastened on to the fruitful mass of native workers, using pamphlets, circulars and eloquent exhortations.

"Workers of the World, Unite!" they urged.

"You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

"You have a world to win!"

"No matter though you are different in colour, you are one in kind with the workers of the world. All those who work for wages are becoming one great brotherhood of labour. The workers of the world are uniting to dethrone the masters of the world—that is, the capitalist class. You, Bantu people, will share in the great deliverance that is bound to come. You, Bantu workers, must also unite to help in the great deliverance of the people from the masters of the world.

"In Russia the workers and poor peasant people have united. They are great in number. They have shaken their chains to the earth like dew; they have entered into possession of the land and the wonderful machines for making the good things of life. And to-day they own them in common, just as Bantu owned the land in common in days gone by. The black workers of India are uniting. They are joining with the workers of the world. And they call upon you Bantu workers to do the same."

And again:

"To-day the Bantu people are no longer free and strong. No longer may they roam at their own free will over the wide veldt land and till the earth in common. To-day the earth belongs to the white masters of the world, and the Bantu people must labour long for low wages to get food and money to pay the taxes. Once they laboured for themselves: now they labour for masters. Small is the land that is now left to the Bantu people. And this is given to them to hold in common poverty, that they may produce offspring in plenty and

## WHITE HEAT

bring forth more and more young labourers for the white masters of the world."

There were eight million black people in the country, and less than one million white men.

The white men were fighting one another.

The black man was invited to do battle.

An ugly, nasty position.

On January 10, 1922, after prolonged and abortive conferences between the workers' representatives and the Chamber of Mines, a strike was declared on all the gold mines of the Witwatersrand, and in the subsidiary organizations, such as the Victoria Falls Power Station, and the town engineering shops. Twenty-four thousand white workers were called out. But the natives hung back. They remembered the fruitless and inglorious finish to the 1914 strike; they were ignorant of the political stakes at issue, and were indifferent to the plots of Boer *versus* the Rest; they had thoroughly re-absorbed their fears and obediences for the white man, irrespective of his nationality; they preferred to remain on the powerfully armed side of law and order.

A large section of the South African Law and Order were Afrikaners whose sympathies rested entirely with the political aims of the strikers, and great numbers of police and soldiers, not only in the Transvaal, but also in the Cape and Free State, had privately decided to side with the rebels in the hour of crisis. With the unofficial knowledge of this backing, the strikers were confident of success.

Had it not been for the European War of 1914, the story of the Rand Revolution might have been different. As it was, though, large bodies of South African miners who had fought with the Allies were childishly anxious now to practice the methods of warfare with which they were so familiar. Young, inexperienced men with glowing accounts of engagement, encounter and victory still fresh in their minds needed little persuasion to join the regimental movement. Commandos of strikers were formed, and all men entered again into the spirit of soldiery. Regular drills

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

under competent instructors were practiced. Each force of workers had its own selected officers, who wore the badges of their rank. Some were mounted. There were cyclist corps and ambulance corps, an intelligence system was inaugurated, and a signaling unit established. There was no nonsense. This was the closest possible imitation of the real thing. A month after the strike had been called, a General Staff had been established and regiments of women were formed to assist the men by pulling out scabs, by force if necessary.

At first the stated objects of the Commandos were the protection of the interests of the workers and their families, but as the army of strikers gradually became fitted with guns, rifles and revolvers, all explanations and terms of reference were dropped. The moderate element among the strikers withdrew, but their places were filled over and over again by unqualified hooligans and ruffians anxious to make a stab at anybody and everybody representing authority and law. The position, of course, ideally suited the extremist leaders, among whom avowed Communists played a large part. They maintained the high temperature of the strikers by feeding them with fiery talk at an endless succession of meetings. One of them told a crowded hall of rebels that he knew the strike must end in a fight.

"We are out to win this fight, and by God! we will, if we have to raze Johannesburg to the ground," he shouted, to the encouragement of joyous, unrestrained applause.

"Whoever heard of a fight without violence?" he demanded. "We must organize the Commandos. The headgears of the mines are worth a fabulous sum, and there are lots of ways of injuring the capitalists.

"A man suggested to me that General Smuts should be shot. I told the man to go and kill him himself. Trust me and the Council of Action, and we will lead you to success."

More applause. More cheers. More speeches. For two months this sort of inflammatory talk went on. The workers were thus led not only to expect a bloody revolution, but also to desire one—to insure it. Commandos were drilled, strictly and regularly.

## WHITE HEAT

Guns were oiled, target practice was held, and men were taught how to unhorse the enemy. All Strike Committees were instructed to take any steps they deemed necessary to prevent scabs from continuing work.

These instructions were followed by memoranda from General Staff informing Strike Committees that, from that time on, the Committees were given full power to do "anything they desired to bring the strike to a successful issue." There were no qualifications. It was a very wide authority.

The attitude and objects of the rebels had, by this time, been clearly set down in a resolution framed by an opposition Member of Parliament, a man called Waterson, and adopted by a mass meeting of workers in Johannesburg. This resolution finally put the match to the petrol that had been spread along the Rand. It was:

"That this mass meeting of citizens is of the opinion that the time has arrived when the domination of the Chamber of Mines and other financiers in South Africa should cease and, to that end, we and the Members of Parliament assemble in Pretoria tomorrow to proclaim a South African Republic, and immediately to form a provisional Government for this country."

This resolution was rejected by Waterson's parliamentary colleagues, but it remained vividly etched in the minds of that mass meeting of workers which had adopted it unanimously.

The Commandos were ready. The men were eager to start.

They were secure in the knowledge that help and reinforcements would be sent to them, if needed, from over the borders of the Transvaal.

There was nothing to wait for.

On March eighth the order was given to all Commandos along the Reef, and that night the revolution started at Benoni with firing from all directions.

For five days this small mining village on the eastern extreme of the Rand was in the hands of the rebels, and the character of

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the revolt was later described by the local magistrate as a quick and rapid approach to the French Revolution.

"Had it lasted another forty-eight hours, it is practically certain that all Government officials in this town, and a number of others, would have suffered death at the hands of the revolutionaries," he declared. "Its aim was undoubtedly to overthrow the Government, and, on the part of a certain section, to establish Soviet rule."

Benoni, Brakpan, Springs, Germiston, Johannesburg, Krugersdorp—from east to west along the ridge of the gold mines the revolution swept. The police were powerless to stem the wave of lawlessness and battle that threatened hourly to overwhelm the Rand. They were impotent and futile in their small numbers against the hysterically successful armies of strikers. The life of the gold mines, the history of South Africa, hung in the balance from one day to the next.

Shops were looted and fires started along the stretch of Reef. Telephone wires were cut and miles of railway line blown up. Natives were attacked and killed because they had not joined the rising. Men and women in civilian clothes were shot at in the streets of Johannesburg, business came to a stop, and this empty, frightened town was left in the hands of the rebels.

The suggested assassination of General Smuts was no mere platform pleasantry. It was a scheme that appealed mightily to the mob. Their chance came when they heard that General Smuts was traveling up by train to the battlefield of revolution. The rebels determined to prevent any interference from the Prime Minister in the most effective and final manner. They arranged to blast away the railway line between Krugersdorp and Lui-paardsvlei. The fuse was laid and lighted. The line was shattered into a thousand pieces, as the lengths of steel and the wooden sleepers were blown high into the air, leaving a deep jagged pit for the train to pass over. Then they waited for the Cape express, with General Smuts on board. They waited some time before they learned that the train had crossed the line a few minutes before it was dynamited.

## WHITE HEAT

After this the strikers made the gold mines the object of their destructive frenzy. A body of about seven hundred men concentrated upon the Brakpan Mine, which was under the authority of Brodigan, the manager. Now, Brodigan had been warned that the revolutionaries were advancing upon his mine. He mustered all available assistance, and counted the support of ten special constables, and twenty-five mine officials with a few revolvers and some defective ammunition. Despite the limitations of his defenses, he decided to resist any attack, in order to prevent the wrecking of the mine.

The Commando advanced in a solid block along the main road, and on reaching the property proceeded to surround the mine buildings and offices. Two of the leaders came forward under a white flag, and Brodigan went to meet them. The revolutionaries demanded possession of the mine in the name of a United White South Africa. This Brodigan refused to countenance, and he had scarcely returned to the buildings when fierce firing broke out from the rebel guns.

For an hour the little band of men in the mine fought with courage, but the revolutionaries closed in on all sides until they had complete command of the position. Further resistance was impossible. There was no alternative but to surrender. Some of the officials threw down their revolvers. Most of them put up their hands. One man hoisted a white flag on his bayonet.

The revolutionaries surged into the building. The mine had surrendered. It was in their hands, as they had planned. But they were mad with the lust for blood. They wanted no calm orthodox victory. They were crazy with hunger for flesh to tear. The mine officials stood motionless, their hands raised above their heads. The rebels rushed blindly toward them. There was blood in their minds. There was strength in their hands. There were bullets in their guns. They forgot everything but their hunger as they surged forward in a merciless sea of red frenzy.

The handful of defenders stood trapped in their own mine, condemned to die in their hour of surrender. An army of men, made brutal with the mass desire to murder, closed round them.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

The conquered men were felled with clubs, gored with bayonets and battered into unconsciousness. One man knelt down to attend to the wounds of a fallen colleague. He was shot in the back with an expanding bullet, and he fell dead across the body of his friend. A shift-boss was taken outside and clubbed to death. A special constable had his skull smashed to pulp with a knobkerrie. Then a young clerk rushed to the telephone to call for help. He was surrounded by rebels. One of them demanded his watch and chain, and as he was in the act of handing them over, he was shot through the back and fell dead across the telephone.

Within a few minutes only four of the original thirty-five defenders were on their feet. The rest were dead or wounded. The mine building was a charnel house—a mortuary.

The lives of the last four men were saved by the belated conscience of one of the rebels. He had been made sick at the sight of this massacre, and he was moved to reproach his comrades for committing cold-blooded murder. His words carried above the sounds of assaults and groans. They pierced the minds and the memories of the assailants. There was a flashing return to normality. The rebels stopped short in their slaughter.

They had killed eight men, wounded twenty-three, and taken possession of the mine.

The story of Brakpan echoed encouragingly along the Reef. The entire Rand, including Johannesburg, was in the hands of the strikers. The victory was complete.

Three days later, at the Brakpan Mine, one of the strikers on sentry duty at the main gates observed a band of horsemen coming along the road. At first he took them to be fellow rebels on a tour of inspection. Then as they drew nearer he distinguished a familiar formation.

"My God!" he shouted, "my God! the troops!"

The horsemen rode briskly. They carried the badge of the South African Mounted Rifles.

Martial law had been declared.

They were the advance riders of heavy Government forces, and were reinforced with bombing squadrons, artillery and all the

## WHITE HEAT

machinery of war. The soldiers of the Government had been instructed to quash the rising. There were no qualifications. The troops closed in on the Reef with official strength and determination.

For a few hours the strikers fought their cause desperately. But their leaders had deserted them, the assistance which they had been promised from over the border never came, and the natives had quietly refused to come to their aid. Alone they could not hope to defeat the great Government army.

They surrendered.

When the curtain came down on the Rand Revolt one hundred and fifty-three people had been killed and five hundred and thirty-four people had been wounded.

The epilogue was played in the courts of law, where two hundred and four revolutionaries stood trial for high treason. In a courtroom crowded with mothers and wives, the Judge-President of the Transvaal faced the rebels in the dock. He was pronouncing sentence on the Brakpan rioters. He found his task a wretched and unhappy one. There was only one course open to the court, he said. He hoped that this trial would serve the good purpose of instilling into the minds of men and women the fact that, no matter how just they might think their cause, no matter how just, indeed, it might be—the court was not concerned with whether it was just or unjust—if the people combined in a movement to enforce their cause at the expense of the lives of quite innocent men, they must realize that they did so at the risk of having their own lives declared forfeit by the law.

The eight ringleaders were sentenced to death.

There were ten other death sentences pronounced in that Treason Court.

Death had long fingers stretching toward the Rand in the summer of that year. It touched the throats of three rebels one fine morning in November, as they were led from the condemned cell toward the scaffold. The men who had fought the forces of law so confidently faced this last inevitable defeat with a song on their lips—the song of *The Red Flag*. Its music eddied round



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

them as they marched forward; the melody swirled through the cells of the jail to be taken up in a long wail by the other prisoners. Then there was silence.

The other fifteen men waited their turn. A queue for the scaffold. They did not want to die. From behind the prison walls they begged for life.

They pleaded this new cause in a joint letter to the Governor-General.

"We are not murderers as we understood the word," they wrote, "nor did any of us wish to take life for our own advantage or revenge. We did want to keep as much of the good things of life for our families as possible; we struck work and, as hunger pressed, fell readily into the Commando organisation prepared for us by others who were more far-seeing and who, when it came to the point, left us to take the risk and bear the blame. The men who incited us by speech did so with impunity. We now see that we were wrong and that, especially by taking arms or associating with others who did so, we foolishly allowed ourselves to drift into the position of having to either use those arms, or be branded as cowards by those who were inciting us to violence.

"We are not men of experience or education, and really believed that the country was behind us in attempting a revolt, and that it was a patriotic part we were asked to play. The discovery of the truth has been bitter. As to the murders of the police and officials on the Brakpan Mine after they were rendered defenceless, we wish to express our deep abhorrence at these crimes——"

All death sentences were later commuted, and two years after the opening scene of revolt, the last of the treason prisoners was released.

Thus the curtain came down on the last act to shut out the players, and to finish the plot. It was the end.

There was no applause.

None was asked for.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

SINCE THAT FAR-OFF DAY WHEN HE HAD MADE THE OLD BOER FARMERS rock with laughter by buying the Widow Oosthuizen's farm, Joseph Benjamin Robinson had not been idle. He had been much engaged in building up for himself a large fortune and a great store of unpopularity. The good-humored affection in which his rival, Barney Barnato, was held never touched the shrewd, suspicious man that was J. B. Robinson, and he had the unfortunate experience of knowing himself to be the most disliked man in the whole country of South Africa.

Today in Johannesburg the stories told about J. B. Robinson are legion. Middle-aged business men will remember, a little wistfully, the mischief of their school days when they robbed every orchard in the district save that of the hated and much-feared millionaire, who kept vicious dogs to guard his apples and preserve his peaches from naughty fingers. Old pensioners will tell of a maltreated miner who insisted, on his deathbed, that he should be buried on the road that led to Langlaagte, so that J. B. Robinson should be forced to pass the grave, and remember. Gray-haired women will declare that the millionaire was afraid to sit beside an open window, and mining magnates who were once clerks and office boys will describe in detail the midnight expeditions, and the spying, suspicious eyes of the man.

These stories, which fall from a hundred lips, are probably fantastic legends and exaggerated anecdotes. They are valuable only because they serve to show how universal was the hatred in which this man was held. It cannot be mere tradition fastened upon by men who can comfortably revile the memory of a successful financier, the figure of a dead millionaire, for Robinson has been dead only six years, and this is barely time for the misty

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

birth of tradition. The stories of J. B. Robinson are told, not as young recollections of grandfatherly gossip; they are spread in sober description by men who worked through the years with Robinson and who have reached positions of importance where they have no need for envy. Possibly the recollections are distorted by constant use and repetition, but there must have been an image, and it can hardly have been beautiful. From the Cape to the borders of Rhodesia the name of J. B. Robinson stands in an unenviable position of unpopularity, and as the traveler treks up from Table Bay to the golden reef of the Witwatersrand, the ugly background of the millionaire will change from apple orchards and perky schoolchildren to a drop-cloth of winding, crooked paths that led from the mine of Langlaagte when Robinson was its master.

On that summer morning in the year 1886 when the Widow Oosthuizen was baking mealie cakes in her kitchen, when Walker had taken the dusty track to Potchefstroom to raise an option of thirty pounds on Langlaagte, and when the coach with its Kimberley magnates had rumbled on its way to the new goldfields at Pretoria with one seat empty, J. B. Robinson, the missing passenger, had already acquired a reputation for shrewdness and ruthless strength. The rough coarse camp of Kimberley on the diamond diggings had soon learned that it was a mistake to be influenced by the calm innocent expression of the man who had a face like an Evangelical minister without his book, or a Shirley Temple without her curls.

Barney Barnato may have brought a few tricks to the diggings from the back streets of Aldgate: J. B. Robinson, when he arrived, knew them all. He had been born in the Cape Province, and had spent his early manhood fighting rebellious native tribes and asserting his authority. Although he always claimed that his parents had come to South Africa from England with the 1820 settlers, Robinson, throughout his long life, closely resembled the character of the early backveldt Dutchman. He was brave, and strong, and was not afraid of other men. He was brutal in his dealings with the black man, whom he regarded as an animal to be de-

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

stroyed when its period of usefulness to him was over. But he was not altogether a Boer. He was not simple. When, as a young man, he engaged in the art of wool-farming in the Orange Free State, he had ample opportunity of exercising his cunning and natural foxiness. The wide bare country of the veldt, dotted with occasional traders and little settlements of white men, was an excellent playground on which to practise his points, and the business of wool-farming, itself, with all its uncertainties and perversities, was an excellent stone on which to sharpen his wits. He decided very early in life, probably as a result of his own dealings, to trust no one but himself.

When the diamond beds were discovered, Robinson threw up wool-farming and left at once for Kimberley, where he moved silently in and out of the claims and made men wonder, when it was too late. Sometimes they watched him send natives out with instructions to find and bring him the pieces of white glass which meant diamonds to him, and when the black men returned with a haul of pebbles, worth probably one thousand pounds, Robinson would reward them with some beads or a plug of tobacco, or a kick in the buttocks for not bringing more.

Women liked him, and this was strange, for he was neither tender nor generous. It must have been his baby-face.

It must have been his baby-face that won the sympathy of the Widow Oosthuizen the day he persuaded her to part with her farm. The widow was a lucky woman, for she, at least, got paid the purchase price of Langlaagte, even though it was only six thousand pounds for property which was later capitalized at one million, five hundred nineteen thousand, eight hundred and thirty-three pounds.

By the time he had bought the farm that belonged to Old Gert du Plessis and Japie de Villiers, Robinson had shed all his Kimberley trappings. Then he settled into the business of mining on Langlaagte.

To J. B. Robinson goes the honor, if it is an honor and not luck, of being the first industrialist on the Witwatersrand. But, at least, he must be credited with the discovery and proof that the

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Witwatersrand gold reef was not merely a flash in the pan, as Barberton had been, but was a deep and positive formation. The proving of this fact required money, and the courage to spend it, and J. B. Robinson had both.

At first the Reef was thought to be a surface deposit, of no depth, and consequently of no lasting value. But Robinson was not content with other men's theories, for he had private and contrary beliefs of his own. When he became master of Langlaagte he set out to prove these beliefs by sinking a shaft, some distance away from the golden trail of the Reef. The shaft struck the Reef at a depth of twenty-five feet. It suggested to Robinson the new theory that the auriferous rock was neither a surface deposit nor a vertical formation, but that the Reef dipped into the earth at an angle of about forty degrees. Shaft-sinking is not child's play. The operation itself requires a highly skilled knowledge, and the expenditure it entails necessitates a lusty adult bank-balance. Today on the Witwatersrand the sinking of shafts to depth on a new property is estimated to cost anything from one million pounds to two million pounds.

When, therefore, Robinson decided to sink a second shaft at the cost of many thousands of pounds just as an experiment, he was showing a courage not given to many rich men. Robinson wanted to discover if the Reef persisted to any depth, and so, while other men were scratching about on the surface of the Rand and were making quick fortunes from the rich rock that lay on the ground, he was spending a fortune in burrowing experimentally into the earth. He marked a spot about a hundred feet away from the outcrop. A shaft was sunk, and the Reef was struck again at a depth of three hundred and sixty feet.

This proved two things to Robinson: it showed that the Reef dipped at an angle, and that it continued deep into earth. His money had been well spent. He was sure of the Rand, and of himself, now. The next thing to do, on the strength of these discoveries, was to buy up as much land as possible along the line of the Reef, and Robinson began to look about for more land to purchase. By this time, however, the country was alive with

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

prospectors, and the Main Reef had already been pegged out by others to the apparent limit of its extent. Robinson was forced to look far afield for his land, and he turned his attention to the western extreme of the Rand. He examined the ground thoroughly and systematically. He spent many weeks investigating the character of the country at this point, and, when he had made himself reasonably certain of his own judgment, when he had convinced himself that the sheet of gold-bearing rock extended in this direction, he plunged all his resources into the West Rand.

This was a bold step, for the development of untouched property on the Witwatersrand was, and still is, a colossal gamble. Nearly as much money has been lost in South Africa in chasing a rich golden clue to the Reef as was ever made in finding it. The evidence, so carefully collected from the ground, is impishly deceiving. Samples of rock may be taken on surface and at depth; bore-holes may be sunk in half a dozen different places on the one property and each result may show a rich return of gold, but under the crust of the ground the earth lives in a dozen different moods.

The sheet of speckled rock charged with finely divided gold may yield graciously to the bore-hole, giving ten, twenty, thirty pennyweights of yellow metal to the ton. Just a few feet beyond the limit of the bore-hole the Reef may peter out into a barren worthless sea of empty granite. On the other hand, samples and experiments may force the reluctant owner to conclude that his property is valueless, for not a grain of gold shows in the crushing pan or in the laboratory. Perhaps he has sunk three bore-holes, only to find that the earth yields up nothing to him. Twenty yards away the Reef may lie snug and fat, escaping the prying eyes and interfering instruments of the mining man. It is the same story now as it was then. It is the story of Daggafontein, of Marievale, of Government Areas.

About thirty years ago a company was formed to exploit what was reported to be a very promising property at Daggafontein. Reports from geologists and engineers indicated that there should

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

be large quantities of payable gold on this territory. Work was started. A shaft was sunk, and drives and tunnels were made in various directions, but the gold-bearing conglomerate could not be found. The company continued to explore, to excavate, to tunnel, until they found they had spent one million pounds in chasing the gray speckled phantom of the Main Reef. Shares that were originally issued at a pound fluctuated between eight and ten shillings. The development of the mine continued. There was nothing to be found. At last the directors mournfully realized that they had spent one million, two hundred and fifty thousand pounds to make nothing more than a large hole in the ground, and despite the contentions of their engineers that somewhere on Daggafontein there was gold, the company was wound up. Shareholders received two shillings for their original pound shares. A caretaker was employed to keep the workings dry and the machinery in order, and the Daggafontein Mine was then abandoned.

In 1928 the Anglo-American Company was busily engaged in exploiting property in the prosperous district of Springs. They had learned enough from this experience to feel confident about the prospects of the adjoining Daggafontein land. They took over the old company and began to work it. In a far corner of the huge farm they sunk a bore-hole and struck gold. A little while ago the original one-pound Daggafontein shares were considered a good proposition at nine pounds ten shillings per share.

And Solly Joel buried more than two million, five hundred thousand pounds in the earth before he struck the Reef at Government Areas. Now his company signs checks for this amount yearly as the Government's share of the profits, from this one mine alone.

It is just the luck of the game. Men without money are unlucky, though, for half a gamble is more unsatisfactory, more depressing and more expensive than no gamble at all. Men with more optimism than money are likely to lose both in the gamble of gold-mining. But a man's faith is difficult to destroy; his capital disappears more easily. Of the number of companies pro-

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

moted as recently as 1933-34, no less than one hundred twenty-two have already ceased to exist, for "capital" on the Witwatersrand does not mean a few hundreds of thousands. Real capital for developing gold-mining companies must be millions of pounds before any successful result may be achieved.

When he turned toward the West Rand, J. B. Robinson had the necessary money, and the required courage to gamble with it. He formed the Robinson syndicate to purchase nine farms covering an area of forty thousand acres, and including a ten-mile line along the lie of the Reef. This property became the Randfontein Estates, with a capital of two million pounds, and with its formation Robinson became the largest shareholder in Langlaagte, the Block B property and Randfontein Estates. Apart from these interests, he was now one of the largest landowners in the whole country, holding immense blocks of agricultural and mineralized farms in different parts of the Transvaal. In 1893 J. B. Robinson was considered the wealthiest man in South Africa.

Such large vested interests needed careful guarding, and Robinson had arranged with himself to protect them, not obviously, but with the power of secret diplomacy. He decided to use Kruger as a safeguard, and he set out to be amiable and financially useful to the President.

It cannot be imagined that the two men were ever friends. The one was a simple sincere Dutchman, jealous of his country; the other a wily Dutch-speaking Englishman, jealous of his wealth; but, as some sage has remarked, every man has his price. Kruger's price was high, but Robinson could meet it. He lent the South African Republic one hundred thousand pounds. This was neither kindness nor philanthropy; it was the age-old game of self-protection. Like office clerks who flatter the general manager, like reporters who charm the news editor, like typists who dine with the director, Robinson believed in "being nice" when it paid him. He was afraid of Kruger's hatred of the gold-mining industry. He was nervous of the presidential power to make the life of a millionaire uncomfortable on the Rand, and as he was not over-fond of his fellow countrymen in Johannesburg, he did



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

not find it morally difficult to look after himself and leave his brothers floundering. His constant solicitude for Kruger misled everybody—except Kruger. People began to think Robinson wanted to sit on the presidential chair of the Republic, and the more sensitive among them regarded such a possibility as far more unsatisfactory than the direct disagreeableness and antipathy of the Boer leader.

Cecil Rhodes was not speaking frivolously when, in reply to an inquisition on the Jameson Raid, at a Parliamentary Committee in London, he said:

“You might be sure, sir, that I was not going to risk my position to change President Kruger for President J. B. Robinson.”

But Robinson denied presidential aspirations, explaining blandly that he thought he could do better for himself outside the walls of Government than from within.

“I may conceivably at some future time enter the Volksraad,” he said, “with the idea of protecting my large vested interests.”

When the Jameson Raid occurred, Robinson saw in this movement a frightful menace to his financial well-being, and when, after the miserable failure of the Raiders, the angry Dutchmen began to talk of blowing up the mines. Robinson was so terrified that he spent two thousand pounds in cabling advice, instructions, suggestions and prayers. He was in England at the time, living in his magnificent Park Lane home and collecting Old Masters, a sport in which, with the help of Mr. Christie and his hammer, he saw good business.

Robinson went to see Chamberlain at Downing Street about the Jameson Raid. He offered the English Premier advice as to the type of cable he should send Kruger, and then he telegraphed to the President urging him to come to England. He caught the next boat back to South Africa, and went straight to Pretoria to see Kruger. The old Boer explained that his burghers were excited and angry, and that he was having the greatest difficulty in preventing them from blowing up the mines. It was true, then. They wanted to destroy the mines. They wanted to ruin Langlaagte, Block B, and Randfontein Estates. They must be



The speckled gold reef of the Witwatersrand may be clearly seen behind the concrete supports in this large slope.



The slanting angle of the reef is shown in this picture taken in a slope at Crown Mines.



## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

stopped at all costs. Robinson persuaded Kruger to give him a list of the names of the most bitter and aggressive of the Boers. The rest was simple. Robinson himself explained its simplicity.

"Some of the men said their property had depreciated," he said, "and that they had sustained losses in consequence of the Raid. I offered to lend them money at lower rates than the banks were charging, and, after a great deal of trouble, many of them accepted my offer, and I got them into a better frame of mind."

At the same time, he stood security for a one-year loan of six hundred thousand pounds to the Government, and instructed an institution known as the Robinson Bank to discount a promissory note from the Government at six per cent per annum, when the ordinary banks were charging nine per cent. He afterward calculated that his endeavors, as he put it, "to effect reconciliation by easing the economic situation" cost him two hundred thousand pounds—but it must have been worth it to him.

After this, in the year 1908, on the recommendation of Louis Botha, J. B. Robinson was given a baronetcy, and his old Kimberley colleagues were now obliged to address him as "Sir Joseph." His second initial, however, was freely and most fluently translated.

It was in the year 1916 that Robinson met Solly Joel to negotiate the sale of Randfontein Estates. Each man was suspicious of the other's cunning. Both millionaires went warily about the business of buying and selling. Both men were confident of their own specialized superiority in making a deal. Robinson by this time had acquired a peculiar type of deafness which seemed to vary in intensity as the discussions grew more delicate. There were times when he appeared far more deaf than usual. There were times when Joel could have sworn he was not deaf at all. The negotiations consisted of the shouting of Joel and the listening of Robinson, but at last the deal was made, and Randfontein Estates became the property of Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company. The sum paid by Joel for this great acreage of land has never been publicly revealed, but it may safely be estimated at four million, five hundred thousand pounds. Both

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

men were satisfied. Each thought he had made a good bargain. One of them was right.

When Solly Joel sent his engineers to report upon the condition and prospects of his new purchase he found that it was Baby-face Robinson who had made the best deal. Randfontein Estates was as rotten inside as a wormy apple. The mine was in an advanced state of disrepair. The machinery was rusty and out of order. The workings were undeveloped and useless. The mine was as shabby and as demoralizing inside as a slum tenement house. It was many years before Randfontein Estates paid a dividend, and it was for this priceless gem of the Rand that Solly Joel had paid over four million pounds. He said very little. There was nothing he could say yet. He proceeded to put Randfontein Estates in some sort of order, and it was during the reorganization of the mine that the extraordinary story of J. B. Robinson's Randfontein deals was brought out from its murky hiding-place into the light of day.

A diligent auditor, in the course of investigating a certain unvouched payment, stumbled upon one of the strangest histories of business cunning, sharp practice and aggressive domination that has ever been told.

Solly Joel, smarting under his defeat, did not hesitate to take action, and in the year 1921, one of the most sensational *causes célèbres* ever to come before the South African Courts was heard when the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company claimed four hundred sixty-two thousand pounds from Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson. The action became known as the "Secret Profits" case. It grew from a wrestle in the lower courts between two business men into a gargantuan battle between two millionaires fought out in the Courts of Appeal. The courts proved once again that one of them was right.

To appreciate the story of the Secret Profits case it is first necessary to appreciate the relationship between Sir J. B. Robinson when he was chairman of Randfontein Estates, and his directors.

About the year 1893 Robinson began to institute in all the companies of the Robinson group what may be called the depart-

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

mental directorate system. Randfontein Estates, as the parent company, controlled the subsidiaries: its directors were their directors, and a board was gradually formed, the members of which were officials bound to devote the whole of their time to the service of the companies. At their head was John Langerman, afterward Sir John Langerman, and he acted as vice-chairman when Robinson, his employer, was present, and as chairman in his absence. Langerman was engaged to manage Robinson's affairs in the Transvaal, and for this he was paid a salary of five thousand pounds a year with a ten per cent commission on any new business he introduced. The other directors under this system were appointed either by Robinson or by Langerman with Robinson's approval, and these appointments were approved by the Board. There was never any difficulty. Robinson saw to that. Although he was not a controlling shareholder, he held an adequate number of proxies.

Every director had his departmental duty assigned to him; he was either appointed a director and an official at the same time, or he was made a director because he was an official. Not only did Robinson have complete control over the appointment and pay of his directors, but he also qualified them. For many years he did this with his own shares, and as, under the Articles, a director's seat became vacant the moment he ceased to hold his qualification shares, Robinson could at any moment remove any or all of them. They were entirely at his mercy.

At this time Robinson lived, for the most part, in London, although he visited South Africa frequently. His Park Lane house was a sort of private post office, for when he was in England he maintained a constant and regular correspondence by letter and cable with his henchman, Langerman. Thus the operations of his company were reported to him in the fullest detail, and Robinson was always fully alive to every move made at Randfontein. Langerman was a most excellent foil. He was suitably subservient to his boss, and forbiddingly arrogant with the flock of directors. He was careful at meetings not to lay before the Board the correspondence between Robinson and himself, for this

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

would have revealed him in his proper light of servant; instead he framed high-sounding minutes and resolutions in accordance with his instructions, and these were laid, almost autocratically, before the Board.

Occasionally, some director in a defiant mood would dare to voice his opinion on matters outside his own particular department.

There was, for example, the director called Pierce, who once objected to certain transactions. The next day he was told by Langerman that Sir Joseph wished him to resign his seat and proceed to London. That was the end of Pierce. Four years later another director called Butt was informed by Langerman that Sir Joseph wished to reduce the number of directors, and that he was regarded as superfluous. He obediently resigned. Scholtz, a director created by Robinson himself, was informed by letter that he was to take no part in the direct working of the Boards to which Robinson had appointed him. And there were others.

The directors of Randfontein Estates were paid officials forced usually into a state of disinterest regarding matters of policy and finance. They had, as a rule, to be content to leave all such business to J. B. Robinson. The only direction in which they were at all able to assert their own views freely was in the various departments which they had been appointed to supervise, and this was comparatively unimportant.

Some idea as to Robinson's relations with Langerman and his directors may be gained from the correspondence which passed between them. Take, for example, this letter from Robinson to his Vice-Chairman:

"Powers of Attorney to London Agents. The powers you sent appointing Messrs. Butt and Marcus are wrong; they are still on the lines drawn up when Marcus had control of the London Agency. What I require is a power from the trustees of the Companies empowering me as Chairman to appoint the agents in London. I enclose a draft giving you the idea as to what document I require. I shall then appoint under that power the London agents, and I shall have the power

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

at the same time to cancel such appointments when I think fit. The agents now appointed for the companies act under a letter from me in which I inform them that their appointment dates as long as it suits me. You will, therefore, have a resolution passed by the various boards authorising the trustees to sign the power, and you will forward it on to me as soon as possible."

Langerman was told that he would do all this, and he did. He himself wrote a very interesting letter once to Robinson, in which he showed an unusual and dangerous spirit of individuality:

"I have," he wrote, "received your cable that we should not shut down the mill, as it will have a bad effect on the Randfontein Companies, and if anything is wrong with the Porges, it will create a panic in the Randfontein shares. I must, however, draw your attention to the fact that to follow out your policy would be subordinating the true interests and future of the Company to the interests of the dealers in the shares."

And further on:

"I was rather surprised to receive a cable from you asking me how I intended paying the dividend of the Porges. This is a matter for you to arrange, seeing that you have been fully aware of the position of the company as regards the cash and profits; further that the latter did not reflect the true position, as the whole of the development had been charged to capital account instead of to revenue account. This was done on your instructions, and the dividend was also declared on your instructions, because if none were paid it would have a bad effect."

The directors of the Robinson group of companies said nothing. No doubt they did not even know of such dealings. Meetings were held. Resolutions were passed. The years sauntered by, and the Robinson group continued quietly to flourish.

It was in the year 1906 that Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson once



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

again thought of buying more land. The Robinson group, of which Randfontein Estates was the parent company, already held large mineral interests in the three farms, Randfontein, Uitvalfontein and Waterval. The Reef had been traced throughout the farms, but it was on Waterval that Robinson concentrated his attention. He wanted to buy the property outright, but Waterval was held by a farmer named Du Toit, and the two men, buyer and seller, could not come to terms, so Robinson had to be content with a mineral lease. However, old Du Toit died, and in 1906 Robinson was able to buy from the heirs a half-share in the farm. The price he paid was sixty thousand pounds. He still wanted to buy the whole farm, but the young Du Toits refused to sell, promising instead to let him know if, and when, they decided to sell the other half.

Robinson said not a word to his directors about his purchase. But he floated a company with the specified object of acquiring and holding the farm Waterval. The life of this subsidiary company, which was known as the Waterval Trust Company, was limited to two years. Langerman was created chairman, and it was he who, working secretly on behalf of Robinson, reported to a meeting of directors that he had secured the option to purchase an undivided share of Waterval as well as a verbal understanding from the owner to sell the remaining half.

The price, Langerman reported, asked by the owner for the first half and for the option on the second half was two hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds. In view of the intrinsic value of the property, and the immense importance which Randfontein Estates attached to its acquisition and control, he, Langerman, recommended its purchase by the Trust. What Langerman did not see fit to mention was that Robinson was the vendor, and that he had paid only sixty thousand pounds for this very same property.

Such information was carefully and discreetly withheld.

The directors adopted the recommendation put to them by Langerman.

Shortly afterward a draft for two hundred and seventy-five

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

thousand pounds was placed to the credit of J. B. Robinson. Thus within a month of purchasing the land for the sum of sixty thousand pounds, the Chairman of the Randfontein Estates had sold his own company the same property for two hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds, thereby netting for himself a secret profit of two hundred and fifteen thousand pounds. After he had paid out five thousand pounds for expenses and "commissions," Robinson was left with two hundred and ten thousand pounds clear profit.

The Waterval Trust Company, having fulfilled its purpose, was now ordered by Robinson to be put out of existence. A meeting of the shareholders was called, over which Langerman presided, and at which, according to the evidence called in the case, he and the Secretary were the only persons present. After the Chairman had explained the position, apparently to the Secretary, a formal resolution was adopted placing the company in liquidation and appointing Langerman as liquidator. So closed the career of this remarkable company, a company which had proved of the utmost use and the greatest value to at least one man.

Commenting upon the Waterval Trust Company at the Appeal Court, the Chief Justice, Sir James Rose-Innes said:

"The scheme devised did not conceal, and could not have concealed from any one interested the fact that one-half of the freehold had been acquired by the Robinson Group; but it did conceal the fact that it had been acquired from Sir J. B. Robinson, and it gave no inkling of the profit he had made. To me it is clear that the Trust was created to hide his part in the Waterval deal, and the resulting profit. No doubt the freehold was most valuable, and I assume that its acquisition, even at the price which Sir J. B. Robinson fixed, was beneficial to the Randfontein Estates. But in the process of benefiting the company he was making two hundred and ten thousand pounds for himself, and that was a fact which it was necessary to conceal. Upon the evidence before us that seems the true inwardness of the arrangement."

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

The Waterval deal did not, by any means, mark the end of Robinson's game of making secret profits. There was more to come.

About this time an extensive scheme was being undertaken for consolidating the Robinson subsidiaries in order to effect cheaper and more efficient working. In March, 1907, a new company, called the Randfontein Central, was formed, which amalgamated three of the centrally situated subsidiaries, and later absorbed the Waterval companies.

In connection with this amalgamation four blocks of claims, all of which bordered on the properties in question, were thrown into the scheme. These four lots of claims had been quietly purchased before the amalgamation by J. B. Robinson. They cost him about forty-five thousand pounds, and he arranged that his company should buy them from him for more than six times that amount. He instructed Langerman accordingly, and in due course he received secretly for the claims 164,000 shares in Randfontein Central, which shares were valued for the purposes of transfer duty at two hundred and ninety-seven thousand two hundred and fifty pounds.

It was quite simple.

Robinson had made another secret profit of two hundred and fifty-two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds.

An amalgamation of this kind, however, required the assent of the shareholders. A special meeting was called, but as there was no quorum, it was adjourned for a week. At this meeting a quorum was found. It consisted of Langerman and his four Directors, the Record Clerk, the Secretary, and, by proxy, Sir J. B. Robinson. It was resolved by this ready-made meeting to adopt the provisional amalgamation agreement, which provided, among other things, that the four lots of claims be purchased for the company. No one mentioned, however, that the claims had been purchased from the Chairman. This purchase from the Chairman of assets priced at more than a quarter of a million pounds was not only concealed from the shareholders at the time, but it was not even mentioned in the Annual Report.

Langerman was well rewarded for the work he had done, and

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

he received one or two meaty pickings out of his negotiations on behalf of Robinson. Over the Waterval deal he benefited by twenty-one thousand three hundred and sixty pounds, and over the business of amalgamation he stood credited with ten thousand Central shares.

After this, all went exceedingly well with the Randfontein Company. The policy of consolidation was steadily pursued, until Randfontein had absorbed all the subsidiaries and had concentrated in its own hands the mining operations which it had been formed to undertake. It became a large gold-producer, and a prosperous concern.

And then in 1916 Sir J. B. Robinson disposed of practically all his interests in the Randfontein Estates Gold-Mining Company and the Randfontein Central Company to Solly Joel—or, more properly, to the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company. A rearrangement of directors followed. Auditors, accountants, clerks and secretaries examined the papers of the firm methodically and scrupulously. Slowly, piece by piece, the true story of the Randfontein deals was fitted together, and the attention of the new Board was directed to certain extraordinary transactions.

Solly Joel instituted legal proceedings at once against Robinson, claiming from him the profits he had made fifteen years earlier on the sale both of Waterval and of the four blocks of claims. A formidable array of learned counsel was briefed by both sides.

The stuffy courtroom was stacked high with mountains of documents, the back of the court was crammed with interested people and the benches were wedged tight with all the leading men of the mining industry. For twenty-one days the orthodox, conventional voice of the court droned on through technicalities, statistics, methods of procedure and conventions.

Solly Joel, bearded and determined, remembered the bad deal he had made over Randfontein, and was angry. J. B. Robinson, deaf always to the questions put by counsel for the plaintiff, was miraculously restored to perfect hearing when cross-examined by counsel for the defense. The Judges looked grave and severe. There was nearly half a million pounds at stake. The principles

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

involved were serious. The courtroom grew stuffier and stuffier. The technicalities grew more and more abstruse. The judges looked as though they were hearing evidence in a murder case. At the end of twenty-one days they spoke. They delivered verdict.

The Trial Court, by a majority, gave judgment for Solly Joel on the Waterval transaction, and granted absolution from the instance on the claims transaction.

Robinson at once appealed against the Waterval findings. Joel immediately cross-appealed against the claims finding. The battle of the giants had begun in earnest. It was fought with the forces of determination, hatred, vindictiveness—and money.

The Secret Profits case was taken to the Appeal Court, and on the principle that where one man stands to another in a position of confidence involving a duty to protect the interests of that other, he is not allowed to make a secret profit at the other's expense, or place himself in a position where his interests conflict with his duty, the Judges of Appeal found in favor of Solly Joel, the new master of Randfontein, on both claims.

Thus it was that fifteen years after, Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson was ordered by courts of the land to pay up four hundred and sixty-two thousand pounds—the secret profits he had made at the expense of his own company.

Secret profits.

Not quite secret enough.

Robinson was not a good loser. He did not take the finding quietly. He badly wanted to vanquish Joel, even if it had now to be on a minor scale, so he spent the next four years of his dwindling life appealing to the courts on one score or another. The first Appeal Court had ordered him to render an account of all the secret profits made by him, and to pay this amount—with interest. A lower court found that the amount of profit should be based upon the value of the shares when Robinson received them, and not at the price at which he subsequently sold them. Robinson appealed against the finding.

The appeal was dismissed.

The following year in a lower court the money value of the

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

Randfontein Central shares in 1909 was determined at forty-seven shillings and sixpence per share, and Robinson was ordered to pay on this basis.

He appealed.

The appeal was dismissed—with costs.

There was nothing more he could do. He had spent four years fighting the law, pitting his strength against the justice of the country. It had cost him nearly three-quarters of a million pounds, and, for once, there could be no returns, no profits, on this expenditure. He could not even sack the judges or kick them out of their jobs. There was just nothing for him to do but pay up. It was a very bitter Robinson who realized that this was defeat and there could be no retribution.

Early in 1922, while Robinson was still appealing against the many verdicts given against him, it was announced that he had been created a peer. This announcement created a furor, and a slashing storm of protest, indignation and abuse broke over the head of the South African millionaire. In his own country Robinson was always hated for his meanness, his ruthlessness and his contemptible principles. But a local loathing of this sort is always attributed to jealousy, and until Robinson's life-story was spread out in all its tawdry colors before the judges of the land, his countrymen had to be content to voice their dislike without being able to give more justification than a deeply bred suspicion and a mass of unproved incidents. Robinson, like a good many other men of wealth and power, had taken infinite care to lock away from the public gaze the intricate mechanism of his dealings, leaving no more for his critics to stare at than a mere shadow which flickered tantalizingly and uncertainly.

South Africa could point with confident assertion to the fact that the richest man in the whole country was the stingiest and most miserly. It could be shown that of all his millions Robinson had spent no more than he was forced to in his own country, and that his charitable offerings throughout his long life amounted to no more than a handful of hundreds.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

But until the Secret Profits case was brought to the courts, the business habits of the man had been mere talk. Now it was proved. It was fact. This, then, was the man they proposed to make a peer. South Africa was furious. And in England, where the already elected peers of the realm sat in soft gentility, the reports of the Secret Profits case whistled through the House of Parliament in a piercing shriek of unorthodoxy.

Robinson himself, by this time, was more accustomed to defeat. He had learned how to meet it half-way. Like a faithless discovered wife who sues her husband for divorce, Robinson covered himself in a false cloak of martyred resignation. He wrote to Lloyd George declining the honor of a peerage. He wrote at once, for had he waited another day he would have suffered the further disgrace of a flat refusal.

"I have not, as you know, sought the suggested honour," he wrote. "It is now some sixty years since I commenced as a pioneer the task of building up the industries of South Africa. I am now an old man to whom honours and dignities are no longer a matter of much concern, and I should be sorry if any honour conferred upon me were the occasion for such ill-feeling as was manifested in the House of Lords yesterday, and whilst deeply appreciating the honour that has been suggested, I would wish, if I may, without discourtesy to yourself, and without impropriety to His Majesty, to beg permission to decline the proposal."

Robinson was now, as he had said, an old man. His life was rapidly leaving his old worn-out body. For seventy years this man had labored and toiled under the cloudless South African sky. His object had been singlefold. He had worked and plotted to build up a vast fortune and to safeguard himself. Self-preservation was the keynote to the march of his life. He had succeeded in achieving it. But even to his very last day he was afraid of suffering defeat in this one ambition. He had many enemies, and he knew this well enough. In his creaking, rusty

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

old age he lived in perpetual dread that they, at last, would conquer him.

In October, 1929, at the age of eighty-nine years, Joseph Benjamin Robinson died.

The Press of South Africa gave him the space in their sheets warranted by his millions, but they abandoned the glowing, tolerant form of the usual hypocritical obituary notice, and confined themselves instead to a setting down of facts purposely molded to exclude any sign of appreciation or sympathy. This far they went. But they followed their professional honesty no further. The man was dead. It was the end. No useful purpose could be served by raking over the ugly ashes of the finished millionaire. They waited merely to publish his will before they wrote Robinson off their books.

It was estimated by shrewd judges of finance that Robinson was worth ten million or twelve million pounds when he died, but when his assets were proved it was found that he had left no more than two million five hundred and sixty-two thousand, four hundred and eighty-five pounds. The people of the country would not, and could not believe this. Robinson had always been known as the wealthiest man in South Africa, and in a land of millionaires two and a half million pounds scarcely qualifies a man for the ranks of the rich upper ten.

The wily old devil must have cheated up to the last moment, they declared. But where was the money he had withheld? The morning paper of Johannesburg, the *Rand Daily Mail*, supplied an answer for them.

"The *Rand Daily Mail* is informed on what must be very good authority indeed that a sum of £4,000,000 was lent by the late Sir Joseph Robinson, Bart., to the Italian Government. If this is the case, the mystery of the missing Robinson millions is explained—in part, at any rate. Other millions may still have to be accounted for.

"For many years past rumour has been busy with regard to the extent of the fortune of one who was regarded, rightly or wrongly, as one of the wealthiest men who have ever been



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

connected with South Africa. Few men would have estimated his fortune at less than £10,000,000; most would have put it as somewhere in the neighbourhood of £12,000,000.

"When, a week or so ago, the total value of the estate was declared at £2,562,485, the whole South African community experienced a moment of stupefaction. Could it be possible, people asked, that a man whose career had been so sensationally successful in a financial sense, whose money-making instincts had been so strongly developed, whose habits had been so notably penurious, could leave a fortune so ludicrously out of proportion to the popular estimates of his wealth?

"It seemed impossible that this should be the case, but there were the figures, and it was hard to see how the matter could be advanced any further.

"But the statement which has now been made to the *Rand Daily Mail* places the matter in an altogether different light. Obviously, a Government inquiry into the question is necessary. If the facts are as stated, an enormous source of revenue to the Union Government is threatened. Many hundreds of thousands of pounds are involved.

"Sir J. B. Robinson certainly had sentimental feelings towards the Government of Italy. There have been many evidences of that. And there was a direct personal tie in the fact that his second daughter is the wife of Count Labia, a member of one of the oldest patrician families of Venice, and one of the most highly-favoured of the protégés of the Italian Dictator, Mussolini, after whom one of their children has been named.

"In this connection it is very interesting to note that very shortly after Sir Joseph Robinson's death a decree was issued by the Italian Government creating an Italian legation at Capetown and nominating Count Labia, who had hitherto acted as Consul, as Minister Plenipotentiary in South Africa. Shortly before that various South African representatives had been given similar status abroad. What amount of significance is to be attached to these events, considered in conjunction, it is impossible to say, but they certainly seem to provide occasion for thought, especially in view of the fact that in

## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

later years Sir Joseph Robinson is known to have entertained an exceptionally kindly feeling towards Nationalist Government.

"The report which has reached the *Rand Daily Mail* is given with all reserve, but it is certainly sensational enough to demand immediate searching investigation on the part of the Government. The loan is said to bear interest at the rate of 5 per cent., and a further condition is alleged to be that it is free of income tax and death duties.

"Further developments will be awaited with eager anxiety by the whole of the white population in South Africa."

There were no further developments, of course, apart from a vigorous denial of the newspaper's imputations by the Italian Consulate at the Cape. And so the theory that Robinson had rid himself of his millions by lending them to Italy remains no more than a theory built up from suspicion and circumstance and having no solid foundation of fact. It was well that the *Rand Daily Mail* published its opinion with emphasized reserve.

But when Robinson's will was made known it provided a far more substantial basis for comment.

This document bequeathed the entire fortune of the millionaire to his family. Not one single penny was left to charity or to the country which had proved so profitable to Robinson. The distribution of the money among members of the Robinson family was unusually unbalanced.

The will directed that the estate be divided into three parts. The interest on one-third was to go to Lady Robinson, for life, on condition that she should support and maintain her daughters Constance and Leonara.

One-third was to go free and absolute to Countess Labia, who was also appointed executor with full powers. The interest on two-thirds of the remaining third part was bequeathed to the new baronet, Sir Joseph Robinson, while the capital was held in trust. Miss Florence Robinson was to receive the other third.

Mrs. Young, another daughter, was to receive one thousand pounds:

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

"And no further amount of capital shall accrue to her either directly or indirectly."

The two children of Wilfred Robinson, another son who died in 1922, were to receive five hundred pounds each.

This was the old man's swan-song.

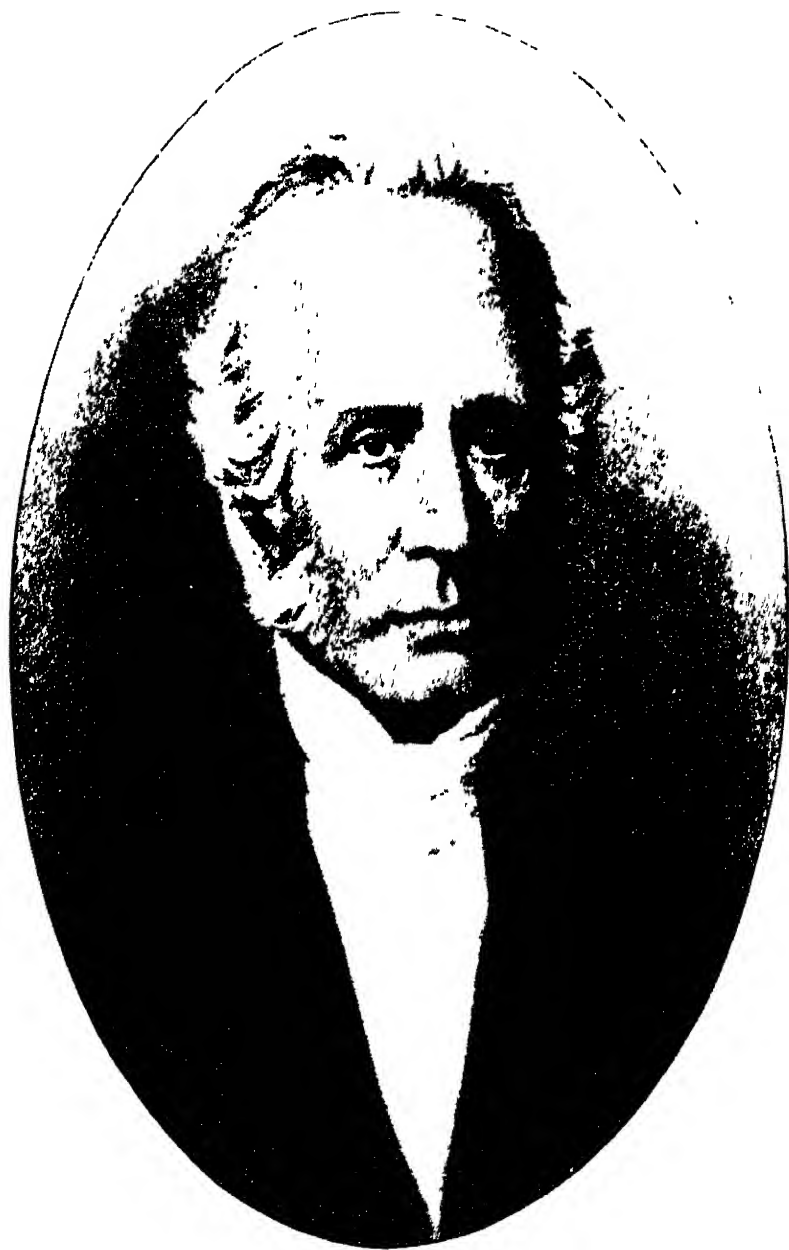
It was left to a newspaper to write the country's epitaph on Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson. Sick of restraint, weary of convention, and rebelling against both hypocrisy and a silent acceptance, the *Cape Times* removed a pencil from behind its ear and at last wrote what it had always wanted to say.

The next morning the column reserved for leading articles was filled with a candor and a vehemence unusual enough to make newspaper history:

"*'De mortuis,'* says the Latin proverb, *'nil nisi bonum,'* which is to say that when a man is dead nothing but good should be spoken about him. But dead men speak through the wills which they leave behind them; and some men are so unfortunate, or, it may be, so inveterately evil in their lives, that the voice with which they speak through their wills after they are dead has nothing but evil to say of them. *'Ex mortuis,'* in that case, *'nil nisi malum,'* which is to say that the wills of such men say nothing but evil about them, thus negating the reluctant reticence which their death imposes upon those who survive them.

"Among such wills, speaking nothing but evil about their makers, the will of the late Sir Joseph Robinson is most deadly conspicuous. He is in his grave, and the voice of his contemporaries is perforce silent about the evil which his long and unredeemed career compelled them, without known exception, to think of him.

"Thus debarred from speaking their minds about this dead millionaire, his contemporaries have at least been able to feel that they are under no compulsion to attempt the forlornly charitable task of saying anything good about him. Their self-restraint from uttering words of condemnation over his



J. B. Robinson.



## THE SECRET PROFITS CASE

recent grave is compensated by the words which he has himself spoken in his will; just as their refusal to say anything good about him is wholly justified by the will itself.

"The will offends against ordinary human decency in two ways, which would be revolting enough if the sum disposed of was insignificant, but seem—perhaps without logical justification—much more scandalously repugnant when they are the deliberate intention of a man to whom the chances of his mortal life had brought a huge fortune. The will, in the first place, throws contemptuous legacies amounting to two thousand pounds in all—out of those piled millions!—at the heads of one surviving daughter and two grandchildren. These unfortunates have evidently incurred the wrath of this earthy tyrant, who, unable to take his gains with him to the next world, chose to mark his anger against these three, and incidentally to brand his own character, by leaving them legacies so pitifully small that they amount to a mere negligible fraction in comparison with the total disposed of by the will, of the proverbial shilling with which the poor father cuts off a child who has incurred his anger.

"The least vestige of decency in the late Sir Joseph Robinson, while he was alive and about this deadly business of will-making, would have warned him that, if he was determined to penalise these three descendants of his, it would be well to leave them without mention of any kind in his will. No warning of the depth of contempt which these vindictively minute legacies to his own flesh and blood would bring to his memory seems to have visited this angry old man. His eyes were shut during his lifetime. After his death his will speaks out the almost incredible malignity of his nature.

"That is one way in which this will stinks to Heaven—though the mention of Heaven in this connection trenches on blasphemy—against the elementary canons of private human decency. It stinks, too, against public decency. This man owed the whole of his immense fortune to the chances of life in South Africa. He has not left a penny out of all his millions to any public purpose in the country which showered such immense gifts upon him. It would have been less scandalous that he should have failed to leave anything to any public

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

purpose if during his life he had been a public or private benefactor, even on a scale of temperate liberality. He was not. His immunity against any impulse of generosity, private or public, was so notorious that the name J. B. Robinson became, during his life-time, proverbial for stinginess, not only in South Africa, but wherever men of the world congregate together.

"South Africa is big enough to feel no grudge against the late Sir Joseph on this account; but any newspaper which has a claim to represent the public opinion of South Africa is under a stern duty not to mince words in condemnation of such a will as this. It carries a dreadful penalty. It brands the name of the man who made it with an infamy so conspicuous as far to transcend the highest pinnacle of scorn which the indignation of his contemporaries could have raised against him.

"The evil which the dead man thus speaks of himself is terrible to contemplate. It will live in the records of South Africa for all time; and those who in the future may acquire great wealth in this country will shudder lest their memory should come within possible risk of rivalling the loathsomeness of the thing that is the memory of Sir Joseph Robinson."

Thus spoke the voice of South Africa, amid applause. Robinson, in his life, never heard a verdict more terrible.

## CHAPTER IX

### VISITORS' DAY AT LANGLAAGTE

THE WIDOW OOSTHUIZEN WOULD BE VERY SURPRISED IF SHE COULD see her farm today. Probably she would be most annoyed. It is true that a great fine drive leads up from the main road which has come but a short way from Johannesburg; but the old farmhouse, with its bare living room and its wide kitchen, in which the widow was wont to cook roosterkoeks, has gone forever. In its place there is the low red-brick building of the mine office, surrounded by iron sheds, and backed by the great gaunt structure of Langlaagte headgear.

And where the widow's few lean and sharp-ribbed cattle once fed on the stubbly slopes now stands a great white mountain of fine sand. A dump, no doubt the widow would call it contemptuously, but nevertheless correctly. It is true that hens still pick about hungrily in the red earth of Langlaagte, but this is not so much a fine historical accuracy as the domestic instinct of the sub-manager's wife. All else is changed.

There is even a stone tablet stuck somewhere in the vast area of the farm which was never there before. The tablet is lettered, and the information it gives is that on this particular spot, fifty years ago, George Walker discovered the gold-bearing reef of the Witwatersrand. How incensed the Widow Oosthuizen would be to have the name of her handyman plastered about her property! How incensed she would be to see cocopans running along tracks all over Langlaagte, and native boys marching in droves over the farm! How angry she would be if she could see what was going on at this moment!

For today is visitors' day at Langlaagte.

A number of strange people have collected outside the manager's office to go down the mine. There is an elderly English



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

spinster who is long, thin and eager. An American tourist, doubtless unaware that it is only half-past eight in the morning, destroys his cigar in deep long puffs. Two young officers from Simonstown stand apart determined to have no truck with anyone other than the Navy, while a small red-faced man who was once something obscure in England, and later something apparent in India, pushes his way in and out of the group asking irritating questions in a soothing voice. Near you stands an old lady whose son has just been appointed underground manager on the next mine. She is going down Langlaagte in order to keep up with her son's dinner-time conversation, and is now wondering nervously if her maternal devotion has not been a little excessive. There are others, too; but there is no sign, no trace of a Robinson, or a Honeyball, or a Harrison. Not even the faint atmosphere of their ghosts.

There is a scurrying sound behind you, and the Anglo-Indian presents himself smartly to you.

"Aha," he says brightly, "what are you doing here?"

Just for a fraction of a second you are surprised. Your mind flies to negative. Is there any reason, you wonder anxiously, why you should not be here? And then you are seized with the thought that perhaps you have met this man somewhere before. On the boat, perhaps. Or during that week-end in Capetown. Perhaps you knew him very well.

"Well——" you say uncertainly.

"I always ask people that question when I first meet them. It makes a very interesting study in sociology. I always maintain that it was my directness of approach in India which won me my election."

Government, railway, beet-industry, or Salvation Army? you wonder; he did not say.

"My son," says the old lady, "is underground manager at Crown Mines."

The Anglo-Indian pleasantly ignores her.

"Where do you come from?" he asks you.

"Well," you begin, "I am a native of ——"

## VISITORS' DAY AT LANGLAAGTE

"Ah," he says, "I'm very interested in the native question. I studied it in India, you know."

"I say——" The English spinster comes up alertly. "I say, it's quarter to nine, and they told us to be here at half-past eight."

"He was appointed last Tuesday," says the old lady.

A man in his shirt sleeves, with a felt hat placed rakishly on his head, comes out of the mine manager's office and asks the visitors to step inside. You are shepherded into a large bare room. In the middle is a deal table piled with old clothes. The man with the rakish hat doles two pieces out to each person—a black mackintosh splashed with mud and a sou'wester to match. There is a sound of girlish laughter as the women of the party inspect their new costumes, and the English spinster emerges looking ridiculously coy in a mackintosh which laps against her knees, and a sou'wester which ties up in a bow under her chin. The Anglo-Indian, mercifully submerged in a coat made for Carnera, is not too inconvenienced to ask the Navy if they have ever been East. The Navy looks painfully surprised at such a suggestion, and busies itself by trying to flick the mud off its sleeves. You, too, have a mackintosh of immense proportions, and a sou'wester which sits on the top of your head in your calm moments but falls off when you sneeze.

Thus clad, you walk out of the office and begin your mining investigations. The dusty road to the shafthead is lined with pieces of rusty iron, old wheels, rails, and rods of varying length. A few chickens peck about hopefully. In front of you great white mountains of sand stand out glaringly against the blue sky. The silhouette of these dumps is alive with movement. Thousands of little iron carriers are laboriously climbing the sides to be tipped over the top and leveled off by the native workers.

The people who have elected to show you round are kind and patient. There is a Cornishman who has spent more than the average lifetime on the Rand, and who hankers now, at last, to be home. There is a tall, lithe young man with a shock of red hair and an interest in football. There is a neat-looking official in a navy-blue suit, miraculously clean, who is addressed respectfully

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

as "Mister," not, apparently, on account of his cleanliness, but on account of his position, which remains irritatingly obscure.

They lead you to the shaft-head. A great gaunt mass of wood and iron rears itself above you. Below it is the empty shaft. The old lady in the party walks up to the edge and peers down. She comes back almost immediately.

"It is very black," she says. "It must be dreadfully deep."

There is a noise of rushing wind, and quite suddenly a narrow iron box shoots up from the depths of the shaft and presents itself to you as your cage. This, you think to yourself, cannot be right. There must be some mistake. But there is no mistake. With a gentle, persuasive smile on his face, the red-haired young man asks you to step in. You want to ask whether it is not possible to walk down, but you have not the courage. The Navy is looking so used to this sort of thing.

The cage is long and shallow, rather like a large coffin for use in tropical countries. It is held up by a simple-looking steel rope. It has three stories or tiers, and each tier has an iron door. Some of the people are climbing upstairs to get to the top story. You worm your way through the narrow opening on the ground floor. You have no option but to press yourself against the back of the cage. The steel wall on your left is perforated with holes like a pianola score. The scraping of feet is just an inch above your head.

The Anglo-Indian comes and stands in front of you. There is only room for six people, two abreast on each tier. You are wedged tight. The Cornishman squeezes himself in, and even the spinster who objects to his pipe is glad. He locks the iron door, there is a shout and a ringing of bells. Each number of rings means a different thing to the control man. This time they are sending a message.

"Visitors—treat 'em gently," they are saying.

Very slowly and smoothly the cage begins to move. It drops down gently and vertically. The darkness grows thick and heavy.

You have traveled nearly a thousand feet down already, and it is comfortable going. You begin to notice that your feet are be-

## VISITORS' DAY AT LANGLAAGTE

having strangely. They are calmly moving upward. You feel yourself being pressed against the frame of the cage, and the Anglo-Indian in front of you is getting uncomfortably close. The next minute you are lying flat on your back, and the Anglo-Indian is lying flat on your stomach. You are like two grotesque dolls in an iron box being carried the wrong way up.

The Cornishman explains that the cage is traveling down a steep incline. You wonder a little about that rope, and make a mental note, at the same time, to get into the cage last on the return trip so that you can lie on the Anglo-Indian's stomach.

The cage is slowing down. It stops. The iron gate is opened and you clamber clumsily out. You knock your hat off. The bells are rung again, but this time the signals are different.

"All clear—let her go, boy," they say. And like a flash the great iron cage is whisked out of sight up the shaft, traveling at a speed of eighteen hundred feet a minute.

You are standing now on the seventh level, about two thousand feet below the surface. The clearing around the shaft is called a "station," and is the central point on each level of the mine. There is an unmistakable smell of carbide about, and this is explained when a native presses a lamp into your hand. You start off, following the Cornishman in single file—through a door, and into a long narrow tunnel, which has been blasted out of the rock. The lamps throw flickering shadows on to the jagged surface, and draw the forms of the people in front in dark outline. But the light does not last long. It is soon dissolved in the thick glutinous darkness. The air is moist and clear, and there is a strange silence in the tunnel. You walk on through the mud, skirting the wet sharp rock—a fantastic procession of ghosts in black mackintoshes silently threading its way into the earth.

There is a kind of pressure about your temples and your eyes. The moisture makes the air heavy. Once you slip in the slime, and as you laugh half apologetically, the noise belches out like a sail caught in the wind. The procession marches quietly on. It is like walking through the pantomime caves of Ali Baba. At any moment a genie might spring from the rock, seize your lamp and

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

make off into the darkness. You look accusingly at the Anglo-Indian.

Presently the Cornishman stops. You and the other sou'westers crowd round him in the mud. Using his lamp as a pointer, he shows you the gold-bearing Reef. The tunnel through which you had come was blasted out of barren rock to afford a communication and passageway between the various drives in the mine. This rock was useless, and apart from strengthening and supporting various parts of the mine, it was regarded as waste.

But now the Reef has appeared in the drab grayness of the walls. It winds its way clearly in a speckled band, now broad, now narrow, along the drives of the mine. There is not a grain of gold to be seen, but only white pebbles cemented together in a slaty rock matrix. The old Dutchmen used to call this formation "banket," the Dutch word for almond-rock toffee, and that is what it looks like: a gray-colored toffee with large white almonds. You follow it with your eye, and run your hand respectfully over this—the famous golden Reef of South Africa. You declare triumphantly that you can see specks of gold in the rock, only to be told that those specks of gold in the rock are iron pyrites, and that the invisible gold surrounds the pebbles, and rarely, if ever, is found in the matrix, or toffee, itself.

You walk along the side of it, along the richest avenue in the world.

A little way ahead, on your left, the tunnel wall is broken by a great slanting slit. You scramble forward to see, and your hat falls off. At the bottom of the slit miners in khaki shirts and heavy boots are to be seen walking about. These men have blasted and drilled their way down there in following the slant of the Reef, and as the rock fell away from the gelignite, it was loaded into trucks and hauled to the surface to make gold. On every level of the mine the same process of blasting and developing is in process, as the reef is picked out of the rock and is followed down, always deeper down.

You are invited to join the miners at the bottom of the stope. Your method of descent, it is explained, is simple. You merely sit firmly on the ground and slide down the rocky face of the slope. You look at that sharp hard surface. You consider the physical

## VISITORS' DAY AT LANGLAAGTE

endurance of man, and then, at last, you boldly ask whether it is not possible to walk down. The elderly spinster is already squatting on her haunches ready to slide. She means to be daring and adventurous today at all cost. The red-haired man leaps forward eagerly. He offers to walk you down to the next level where you will see the jackhammer being used. Some of the others decide to come too.

Slowly and carefully you squelch back to the shaft through the mud and water and along the sharp gray tunnels.

Running down the side of the shaft is a narrow flight of stairs. They are steep and apparently endless. As you climb down them something whistles past your right ear in the dark. It is a cage flying down the incline a few inches away at a speed of one thousand eight hundred feet a minute.

Your lamp has been blown out by the sharp rush of air. On and on you go, and with each step down you feel the muscles in your calves becoming more obstinate. At last you reach the eighth level. It is hot and clammy here, and as you start again through the tunnels you perspire secretly under your ridiculous helmet.

At the end of the tunnel you come across a narrow aperture leading into a wide cavity, the walls of which are lined with gold-bearing rock. You scramble forward on your hands and knees over the loose wet stones to watch a man on the other side using a jackhammer. He drills a hole three feet long in almost as many minutes. The noise of the drill is deafening. The air becomes laden with tiny flying particles of rock, and as the sparks fly from the drill the miner becomes enveloped in a yellow fog. He is naked to the waist, and the muscles of his back and neck are strained and hard as he uses all his strength to hold the fierce vibrating instrument in check.

The red-haired man has all the energy his coloring claims for him. He insists on taking you back to the shaft again and walking you down to the next level to show you the sorting processes. By the time you get there your thigh muscles have joined with your calf muscles in an aching resentment. The old lady who has

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

been following some distance behind has now lost all interest in mining operations.

In the sorting-rooms you see moving belts laden with hundreds of tons of gold-bearing rock slowly moving on their way to the crushers. Native workers stand along the side of the belt deftly picking out any barren rock that may have been included. It seems incredible that so much rock could be taken out of the earth without causing the complete collapse of the surface of the continent.

A piece of blanket is given to you as a souvenir. You clasp it as firmly as you would hold a bag of diamonds. It is a large lump of speckled gray rock. It is worth about three-eighths of a penny.

And then you make your way back to the shaft, where the cage is waiting to take you up to the surface. You crawl inside and lie down on your back. The Anglo-Indian crawls in and lies on your stomach. You had forgotten your early plans. Six rings, and the cage moves off. Gradually the Anglo-Indian takes himself off, your ears block up, your feet slowly recede, and the next moment you are standing bolt upright again and the cage is at the surface. You blink your eyes in the strong sunlight and look around you. All is just as you left it—but the scrap iron, the dumps, the truck-loads of rock and the machinery hold more meaning for you now. You realize that you know just a fraction of the story of gold-mining, and yet you know more than most people.

A native attentively wipes the mud off your boots, and when you have divested yourself of the mackintosh and sou'wester, you start off across the open ground for the batteries and stamp-mills. You are greeted half-way by the raucous, grinding roar of machinery. The crushers and stamps make more noise than you thought possible. The drums of your ears tingle horribly.

"Great Scott! What a row!" you say.

"What?" shrieks the American.

You admit defeat at once.

In the machinery-room the din is terrific. Great steel stamps are pounding away at the rock, rising and falling quickly, accurately, powerfully. There are hundreds of them, and the force of

## VISITORS' DAY AT LANGLAAGTE

their united action shakes the building in which you stand until the floor dances under your feet and you feel uncertain of your step. You see great boulders and crags being reduced to little pebbles. You see little pebbles being crushed into a powder, and the powder being ground to a slime. You wonder where the gold is. The Cornishman is talking away happily. He waggles an index-finger at the stamps, raises an eyebrow, nods his head with emphasis, and sweeps his right arm round in a magnificent gesture. You are standing next to him, and have not heard a word.

He beckons you to follow him, and leads you out of this building on toward the reduction works. Here you notice great quantities of very dirty water with a scummy froth on top. This water contains the gold-bearing slime extracted from the rock, and in the reduction rooms it is run over a shaking-table covered with corduroy. At one corner of the table a patch of yellow shows.

That, you are told, is gold.

You have seen thousands and thousands of tons of rock and only enough gold to cover sixpence. You are very disappointed.

Even now this yellow patch is not pure gold. It is transferred to amalgam barrels, where it is ground with mercury, and the amalgam is sent to the smelting-house, where the gold is freed. Other concentrates of gold are formed by passing the slimy gold-rock pulp into a cyanide solution containing shavings of zinc. The gold is precipitated loosely on the zinc in the form of a black sludge, which is sent to the smelting-house for heat treatment. All this you are told as you stand in the reduction-room. In one corner a great furnace is glowing, and in it are two red-hot crucibles. Three men rush forward now, and with the aid of iron holders and tongs they lift the crucibles out of the fire.

Very carefully they tip the contents into an iron mold. The liquid comes out in a burning stream; it looks like yellow milk which has curdled. When it has cooled they knock it out of the mold, and there at your feet lies an ingot of gold.

It is not very large: it is about the size of a loaf of bread. One of the officials tells you that if you can lift the ingot you can have it as a gift. You make him say this again in front of witnesses, and



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

discover that he is quite in earnest. So you bend down to pick up your gift and walk away. You strain and sweat, your eyes bulge, and your face grows crimson with exertion, but you cannot lift the ingot half an inch. Just a safe little smelting-house joke.

And then, when you consider that it has taken eight thousand men all day to produce that little yellow brick, eight thousand men pushing, hammering, hauling and carrying all those tons of rock to make one or even two silly-looking yellow bars, you wonder whether it is worth the trouble. A million tons of rock a year they crush in this one mine alone, just to make a bar like this every day. Is it worth it? you wonder, and you decide (quite wrongly) that it is not.

You say good-by regretfully to the Cornishman, and arrange to meet him one day in London. You look deprecatingly at your shoes, thick with dust and a fresh layer of mud, you clutch your piece of blanket firmly, step into your car and drive off along the Main Reef Road, past the white mountains and over the very same tunnels and drives along which you were walking an hour ago.

It has been visitors' day at Langlaagte Mine.

The Widow Oosthuizen would undoubtedly have been annoyed.

## CHAPTER X

### EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

THE VERY NATURE OF THE GOLD REEF OF THE WITWATERSRAND HAS always induced and nourished the popular art of swindling. The elusive character of the speckled ore-sheet, the vastness of the country in which it is hidden, and the fact that in South Africa the miner's dream of home is the discovery of a rich offshoot or an extension of the known pay-streak, make the Rand an ideal and lucrative assembly-hall for the world's sharpest wits.

It is the natural ambition and the indestructible optimism of man that make Johannesburg so profitable for subtle liars and convincing crooks. Every prospector, every digger, every engineer or stockbroker's clerk has secretly dreamed of the day when he will at last stumble across a golden clue to immediate wealth.

Every prospector, every digger, every engineer, every stockbroker's clerk, has decked out such hallucinations with the proud certainty that he will be wise and shrewd enough to give the best effect to, and get the best results from, any such glorious opportunity. And in a fruitful, hopeful field like this it needs only an alert mind and a fluent tongue to wreak havoc on the one side, and to reap another man's fortune on the other. It needs only some trickster with personality and an air of grave sincerity to tell in whispered tones of a rich strike, of a new and magnificent discovery, to show false samples and to produce forged assay results; it needs only some such simple formula to set the victim's dreams stirring, and to make his hopes appear so real and so solidly substantial that nothing—not all the inherent caution and carefulness in the world—will dissuade him from paying over his good money to finance some non-existent scheme. Desire, when it is mixed with gold, will not be forestalled; it will take no advice, it will heed no warning; it will be crushed and battered in pursuance of

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the shining yellow goal rather than stay uncertainly at home.

So it is in South Africa. So it has always been.

There has been more courage displayed by the weaker side in their fight for money than was ever shown in blood battle and national war. A courage, it is true, born of greed and a vicious hunger for wealth and personal power, but a real courage, nevertheless, and one which plunges every resource on the faint chance of victory and success.

In a land where gold makes the foreground bright and glittering, where the background is painted in wispy shadows of luck, and where all men are ready to take a chance, the swindler suns himself luxuriously.

The qualifications for successful roguery have naturally changed as the country has grown older, and the trickster himself has passed through more than one stage of development. At first he was a clumsy unscrupulous fellow with no finesse and little education. But his mere dishonesty gave him a fine advantage over the simple, ignorant, unworldly farmers of the country. He used this advantage to good effect. He had no need for subtlety and cunning; the most obvious, the most glaring and blatant forms of swindling were accepted in good faith by the old untouched Boers of the Rand, and when it was all over they neither swore vengeance nor cursed the spirit of their mean conqueror, but just scratched their heads wonderingly, unbelievably.

When this source of revenue was exhausted, the swindler turned his attentions toward the business community of the new gold-fields, toward the men who were making money in the narrow confines of their offices by buying land and floating companies. It was necessary to have a little more cunning than usual here, for wily men are quick to discover outside dishonesty, and they are equally quick to take righteous and pious action against their competitors. But this was the time when J. B. Robinson was sinking shafts in order to trace the path and permanence of the Reef, and the general uncertainty and geological ignorance which existed on the Rand made any story possible, and most of them plausible.

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

So the swindler flourished, and the years moved by faster and faster.

However, a swindle, like a practical joke, is never much good the second time, and as the town of Johannesburg and the surrounding farms grew aware, by experience, that there was dirty work afoot, the swindler was forced out of his comfortable habits, and was pushed into learning the more advanced rules of his game. Even this was not successful, for as the swindler progressed in proficiency so did the swindled.

There followed a period of acute depression in the criminal world, and tricksters who had hitherto prided themselves on their dilettante methods and on their unhurried, rather rakish procedure, were forced by sheer necessity to swim in the most scummy backwash of their profession. Instead of selling gold which did not exist, they began to steal gold which did exist.

The amalgam barrels in the reduction-rooms of the various mines grew lighter and lighter as deft fingers lifted out a mixture of gold and mercury, and secreted the drab gray mass under shirt or in shoes, to be unpacked in some dark place in the middle of the lonely veldt, and handed over to the shadowy outlines of men with less deft fingers but more agile brains. For the old-time swindler had not yet stooped so low as to do the actual stealing himself. He merely organized the system of thieving. He only mapped out a plan of persuasion guaranteed to involve the most skeptical and unwilling of mine employees. He merely lured the workers toward the amalgam barrels with the promise of infallibility and money. He just sat in some far-off place, watching his agents and collecting his profits. But he was not a thief in the common sense—only in the specialized, rather exalted sense. He was a gold buyer.

The police described him as an "illicit gold-buyer."

Gradually, as the detective force grew stronger and the local magistrates grew more pugnacious, the profession of the illicit gold buyer became less and less desirable, and almost imperceptibly the art of swindling was resuscitated.

This time, however, it appeared in quite a new form. It broke

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

out in high places. It hid slyly behind the doors of the town's most respectable business men. It prospered surreptitiously on ledger entries, on debits and credits, on foils and counterfoils, on Stock Exchange script. It fastened and fed now, not on men's ignorance, nor on the gold of the mines, but on paper—ordinary paper with penned or printed words.

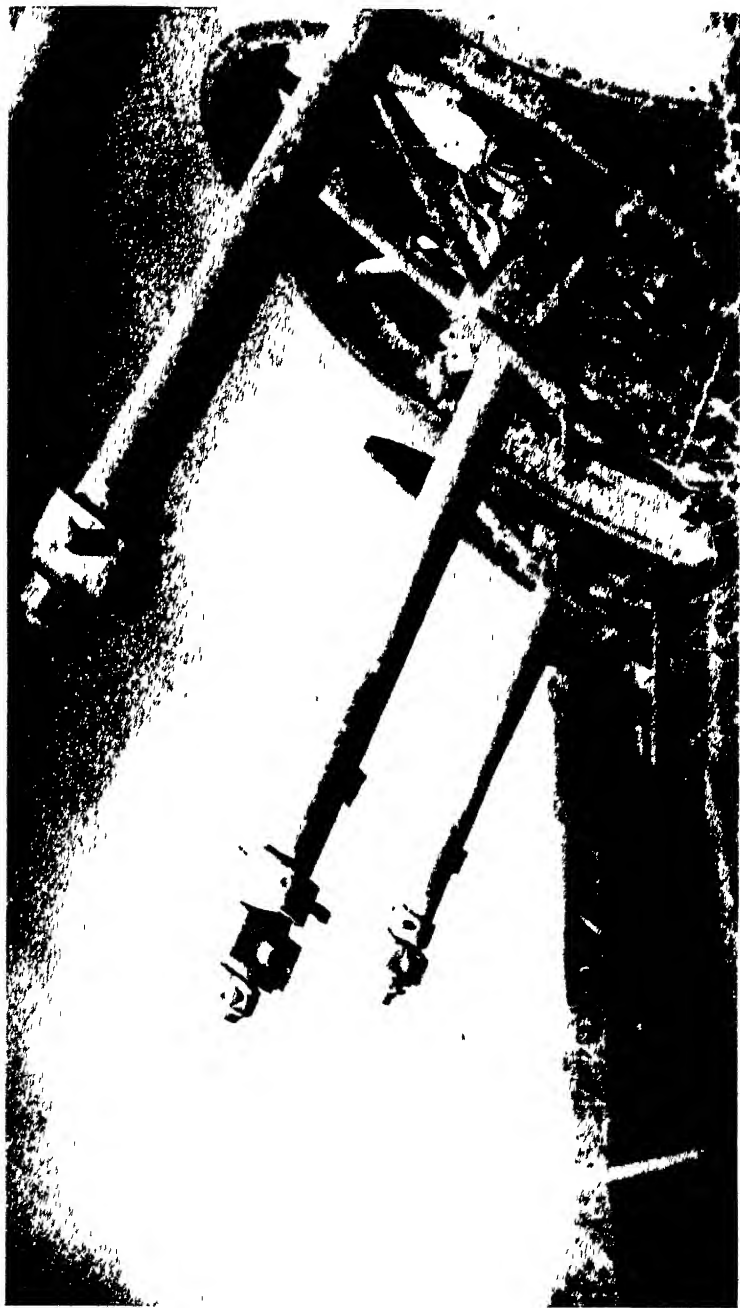
And the swindler himself had changed almost as much in character as his methods had changed in practice. He was no longer a cynical, half-bored young man, amused at older men's foolishness but not too amused to be honest with them. He was no longer a dark wary thief, working by night, and using the weakness and greed of others to satisfy his enormous and comparatively safe hunger for gold. He was no longer the three-letter man. He had made immense social progress. Anyone meeting him in the street, or in his club, or in his lovely expensive home would hardly realize that this was a descendant, a blood relation of the old-time swindler. The years had wrought a subtle change of balance.

In the early days a man would swindle because he had no money and he wanted some. But later, with the progress of civilization, a man already wealthy would swindle because he had money and he wanted more.

Today, like all other professions, swindling is no game for the poor man.

When gold was first discovered on the Ridge of the White Waters, the people living on its great scattered farms were very surprised. At first they thought there had been some mistake; but as the Ridge became crowded with men who offered them bags of money to buy their land, the farmers grew less inclined to listen to their own private opinions and beliefs.

The trouble with the old Dutch farmer was that he had never been to school, and he could not do addition sums. Subtraction, practiced so adeptly by his customer, meant less than the dust to him. And when, therefore, a prospective client began talking very quickly and in a language which he fondly believed to be



Machinery which was part of the gold story yesterday lies rusting in the grass today.



## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

Dutch, and when, to emphasize his offer, he began to throw money on the table, the old farmer was staggered, stunned and bewildered.

This was all according to plan. A man who is stunned, staggered and bewildered—a man, that is, who is taken off his natural guard—is a far easier dupe than a man kept comfortable and cool by his accustomed normality, and it was extremely important for the swindler to start off with the advantage of his opponent's disadvantage. He wanted to buy the farmer's ground, not because he thought there was gold on it—as a matter of fact, he was pretty certain that there wasn't a speck of metal on this particular property—but it was near enough to the Reef itself to command interest, and he knew where he could sell it as a rich auriferous farm.

The first move in the game was to persuade the old Dutch farmer that there was absolutely no gold on his ground. So far he was honest. But the swindler next persuaded the old man that he had taken a fancy to this part of the country, and wished to settle down in order to grow corn and keep cows. Then the discussion moved forward to embrace talk of terms and finance.

Stories of these early dealings of the Rand sound ludicrous and impossible to modern sophisticated ears. That sellers should be so stupid, and buyers should be so lucky is difficult to credit. But, then, it is difficult in today's environments of silence zones, radio and pan-continental communication to visualize a whole community of people, unwashed, unshaved, uneducated, cut off from the civilization of England by six thousand miles of sea: people thrown onto the higher reaches of the Rand, and left there to grow amid the tangle of wild bush, with the Bible as a tutor and the beasts of the earth as companions. The Boer was as little cultivated as the dandelion before they found gold on the Rand, and until then it had not mattered. But with the gold rush came the Boer's dilemma.

His trouble was he could not count.

There is a tale in the unwritten pages of South African history which illustrates well the simplicity of those early farmers. It is



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

a tale told with the ring of a true happening. Its form never alters. The facts as related by one person to another remain intact and unchanged.

But the author of this example of swindling seems to vary according to the prejudices of the teller. Some say that it was one man who sat in the bare Dutch parlor impudently diddling his host. Some say it was another. All, however, agree that the victim was a Dutch farmer.

He had undertaken to sell his farm for eleven thousand pounds. It was a large sum, but this old man had heard that there was gold on his land, and he had just enough wisdom to demand a big price. This was a great bother to the gentleman who was buying the property. He, too, happened to know that there was gold here, but it was extremely irritating to have to pay for it. He tried every trick he knew to sidetrack the old man: he promised him a cow that would give more milk than any other in the land; he offered the old man a pot of geraniums and a cooking-stove; he gave a solemn assurance that there was no gold on this farm. But the old man had all the obstinacy bred of ignorance. He was firm in his demand. Eleven thousand pounds was the sum.

The gent went away. He came back next day with a bag full of money. He had bought the farm. Buyer and seller faced each other across the boarded table of the living room. The buyer began to count out the money.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven. That's eleven," he said.

"Yes," said the farmer.

"One, two, three, four, five——" On and on he went. "Nine hundred and ninety-eight, nine hundred and ninety-nine, a thousand. That's a thousand."

"Yes," said the farmer.

"Well, there's eleven—and there's a thousand. There's eleven thousand."

"Yes," said the farmer.

"Will you please sign this receipt?" said the buyer.

"Yes," said the farmer.

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

The old man never could understand how he came to have only one thousand and eleven pounds. He thought there was some mistake, and that the gentleman who bought the farm would pay the difference as soon as he realized the slip he had made. The old man never could understand what a receipt meant.

Whoever it was did a good day's work, for the story, though unlikely, is true.

Normally, the swindler, having purloined property in some such simple fashion, would hasten into town, where he would interview a hopeful and ambitious business man. First he would tell some long, sensational yarn about rich ore deposits, and of the rush of rival business men who were competing madly for the ground. Then he would walk out of the office having sold the old farmer's home at an enormous profit to somebody almost as stupid.

The pity of it was, though, that this artful trick could not be practiced often enough, for even a company promoter will turn. And as one after another were saddled with expensive waste property, the swindler's list of possible victims dwindled miserably. No man, however greedy, is likely to make a money mistake like this a second time.

The crook, with his skin still miraculously intact and his reputation only faintly smudged, had to find some more convincing swindle in order to keep his practice together. It was useless now merely to assure a prospective client that the land being offered for sale was an unworked gold mine. Such statements, having been proved false too often, must now be made to appear decorously correct. And the only way to do this was to look honest, and to allow samples of the property to be taken away for analysis.

The swindler, thus forced by necessity into invention, thereupon created the Perfect Fraud. With constant use throughout the years, this tricky and indigenous art has become known by the affectionate description "salting the samples." The game is commendable only for its imaginative origin. Its actual conception or perpetration is most simple. When a mining house or a company promoter is considering the purchase of any property for

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the development of its possible gold content, it is customary, in order to avoid deception, to send out surveyors and engineers, who are instructed to take samples of the ground and to report on the analytical results obtained.

If the assays show a workable percentage of gold, the property will be bought immediately, without any price-quibbling, and mining operations will be started at once. Thus the embryo affairs of any mining house rest entirely in the hands of the company's engineers. Their report on the samples they have taken is decisive. If they find gold in any considerable quantity in their laboratory tests, the property will be bought. If they do not find gold in their test-tubes and retorts, the ground will be docketed as worthless.

Today these engineers are selected from among the leaders of their profession. They are highly skilled, highly paid men with positions of importance and prestige. But in the old days, when very little was known about the Reef, the Rand engineers were more hopeful than careful, and they were inclined to grope rather meaninglessly along the Ridge in their search for gold. Such men were easy targets for the cunningly placed arrows of the wily marksman, and even the test-tubes and Liebig condensers of the laboratory could be cheated by a certain sort of skill.

Salting the samples was foolproof for a long time. The key to the swindle was to plant gold where no gold existed before, and this was achieved in a dozen different ways. First the swindler obtained some pure gold; a wedding ring, an old watch-chain, or a golden sovereign, any of these was quite suitable for his purpose. He filed the metal down into a fine yellow dust. Then, having started negotiations with some mining house for the sale of his property, he waited for the engineers to come with their little sample bags.

But before the engineers arrived, a subtle and invisible change had taken place on the property. It was at this point always that the different methods of the different crooks asserted themselves. Some swindlers charged the finely divided gold dust which they had so carefully prepared into a rifle, and fired it out in a fine

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

spray onto the rock. Others merely dusted it carelessly over the ground with an impregnated handkerchief. But these schemes were liable to break down, for there was always a chance that the engineers might perversely want to take samples from some untreated, undoctored stretch. In order to prevent any mishap of this nature, other methods of salting the samples were introduced. The swindler became daring. He planted gold under the very nose of the surveyor. Chatting amiably of this and that to the buyer's representatives, the swindler would accompany the samplers in their tour of the property. He would watch them chip off pieces of rock with an eager interest. He would watch the rock being placed in little bags and marked and annotated. He continued to chat amiably. Some ash from his cigarette would accidentally drop off into one of the bags. Some ash from his cigarette would accidentally fall into another bag—and then another and another.

Normally, of course, he did not smoke that particular kind of cigarette. It was too expensive. The tobacco had been specially prepared. It had been rolled in gold dust. Sometimes he would not bother with this complicated procedure. He would just flick plain gold dust into the bags while the engineers were not looking.

The rest was simple, of course. The unsuspecting samplers would go back to town with their bags of rock. The laboratory tests would show that there were rich and consistent quantities of gold on the property. The mining house would close the deal. The farm would be sold at an enormous price. The swindler would go off for an expensive holiday. On his way home he would buy another wedding ring.

Gradually, of course, the engineers and chemists began to wonder how it was that they were always making such extraordinary mistakes. On any given piece of land there was either gold or no gold. If there was gold, the chemical analysis would prove its presence. If the tests gave a positive result, it was inconceivable that the ground from which the samples were chipped was barren. And yet, when the mining company began sinking

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

shafts on the very spot they had examined, there was no trace of gold. Inconceivable, and yet——

The engineers went about their jobs more carefully. They were suspicious now. They eyed the talkative man who accompanied them doubtfully, resentfully. Some of them even brought natives to stand over the sample-bags and so prevent any possible tampering. All this, of course, made life very difficult for the swindler. He was forced to take risks. He had to rely on pure cunning to distract the attention of not one man, but four or five. It was not easy. One swindler failed completely to find any opportunity of planting his gold dust in the samples. There were eyes watching him all the time. He never had a chance. When he said good-by to the engineers, the gold dust was still in his pocket. That night the laboratory of the company's chemist was forced open. Strangely enough, there was no damage done, and nothing was taken. Later the analytical report on a certain property offered to the company at a big price showed the land to be gold-bearing. An opinion from the engineer, included in the report, suggested that this proposition should be valuable to the company.

Of course, some engineers could be bribed outright, and this was an easy and pleasant way of obtaining a favorable report. But the Rand gradually shed its old slipshod, happy-go-lucky ways, and as the Reef was opened up under the headgears and shafts of powerful business combines, efficiency in organization and production was improved beyond the hopes of the reformer, and beyond the fears of the crook.

The swindler was slowly frozen off his illicit perch, and he began to despair. There were still one or two loopholes left to him. There were still people foolish enough to be cheated. There was still the comfort of knowing that the practice of salting samples was almost impossible to prove in a court of law. But one day it was announced that analytical chemists could now differentiate between gold which had been planted in a sample and gold which existed naturally in the rock. This put the lid on the salt-cellar. From then onward new ways must be found of making money without either tears or scruples.

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

There is a rather charming story told in South Africa of an old farmer who was not such a fool as he looked. This old man knew all about the ways of the salter, for he had heard them described in town hotel and country cottage. The idea seemed excellent to him. One morning, after a great deal of bickering and sentimental reproach, he managed to borrow his wife's wedding ring. In a back shed he secretly filed it down to a fine powder. He scattered the gold dust onto some rocks and pebbles he had dug up on his farm, put the doctored rubble into a bag, and set off for Johannesburg. He went to call upon a prominent mining house, and when, at last, he was led into the respectability of the secretary's office, he stood awkward and embarrassed.

"I'm only a poor farmer, sir," he said, as he fingered his great, wide-brimmed hat nervously, "I'm only a poor farmer, and I don't pretend to know anything, least of all about mining and such new-fangled notions. But from what I have seen and heard tell, I think— Well, while I was digging on my farm round Eagle's Nest way— Well, sir, the truth of the matter is, sir; I think I've got copper on my farm. Yes, sir, copper."

The secretary looked up in his pale efficiency.

"If you will leave your samples here, we will have them analyzed for you, and will communicate with you in due course," he said.

The old man went back to his farm. Fortunately his wife had temporarily forgotten about her wedding ring.

Shortly afterward a report on the farm near Eagle's Nest was sent in to the mining company by the chief analyst. The essays showed an exceptionally high gold content on the samples received. The usual austerity of the office was ruffled with incredulity. Good lord! the old farmer's land was gold-bearing. Good lord! the old man didn't know it! He thought it was copper. By jove! What an opportunity! The farm must be bought at once. The old man must be paid—well, say, fifteen thousand pounds for his copper. Ha, ha, what a bargain: fifteen thousand pounds for a gold mine.

Ha, ha!

The old man bought his wife a new wedding ring the following

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

week. He went to church in his usual complacent mood. After all, he hadn't pretended there was gold on his land. He hadn't even said so. He told them quite plainly that he thought it was copper. Apparently he had made a mistake, for there was no copper on his farm. Well, it was unfortunate. And he had never mentioned the word gold. He could not be blamed for their faulty judgment. It was unfortunate for them. Yes, Martha liked her new ring better than the old one. He would buy her a necklace later on, probably—

Round about the years 1890 to 1895, when the illicit gold buyer was in the heyday of his fortune, it was estimated that one-tenth of the entire output of the Rand was being stolen. Every mine along the Reef was being burgled by its own employees, acting under the influence of the hidden I.G.B. man. The thefts became so regular, and the losses incurred by the various mining houses grew to such large proportions, that the Chamber of Mines was moved by duty and a sense of approaching disaster to declare that there was "the strongest reason to suppose that thefts of gold are continually taking place through the fields."

As if to support and bolster up such a novel and daring supposition, the report of the Chamber of Mines, for the year 1891, continues:

"Indeed, it is to be feared that unless some adequate preventive measure is at once applied, the theft of gold will grow into a systematic and organised practice which it will be extremely difficult to check or control. . . . The present officers of the detective department receive constant information concerning parcels of stolen gold, but their hands are simply paralysed by want of funds, and they are compelled to allow the practice to go on almost under their own eyes, for want of the necessary means to secure conviction of the offenders."

The scene of the crime never varied. The gold always disappeared from the reduction-rooms of the various mines along the Rand. The actual recovery of gold from granite is effected in the

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

reduction-room. The auriferous rock which has been crushed to a fine sand was mixed with water, and was, in those days, passed over amalgamated copper plates in order to bring any free gold into contact with mercury, which amalgamated with it. These plates were periodically scraped and the gold amalgam was removed. Later in the process the gold amalgam was retorted and the gold was recovered in a spongy mass, which was melted into bars and sent to the refinery for purification.

There are, as a rule, two workers on duty in the reduction-room during each shift, and there is always a perfectly normal and natural reason why one of them should leave the room at least once during the shift. For a few minutes the other worker is left alone with the concentrated gold of the mine; a few minutes is long enough, though, to unscrew the amalgam barrel, remove perhaps a handful of the glutinous gray content, secrete it somewhere, and be unruffled and calmly at work when the second man returns.

As the mine authorities have never adopted the policy of searching their employees before they leave the property, the first stage in the theft is conducted with comparative ease. The workmen who steal amalgam from the reduction-rooms are usually men with large and vociferous families, men who have fallen into debt and can find no honest way of meeting their obligations, or young miners with advanced and expensive ideas.

The illicit gold dealer has already made contact with such worried workers. He and his agents have probably met them casually at some pub or race-course, or perhaps they have forced an introduction through some other person. When desire, or necessity, presses the worker hard, the time is ripe for the illicit gold dealer to put his proposition with all the skill and eloquence possessed by the average criminal. He will explain that the actual theft of the amalgam is child's play. It is as simple as the alphabet. It is as safe. When the workman has appropriated any convenient quantity of amalgam, all he has to do is to hand it over at a prearranged place to an appointed agent. He will get paid at once. That would be all. Just like falling off a log. Money for



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

jam. Of course, it is suggested, to avoid all possible chances of detection, it is advisable to steal a small quantity every shift rather than a large quantity at odd intervals. Small quantities of amalgam can never be missed from a barrel.

Once the illicit gold buyer has persuaded the wretched workman to steal for him, he does not appear anywhere near the mine or the miner again. He veils himself behind a curtain of agents. It is the agent who meets the thief at some lonely, unwatched place. It is the agent who pays for the amalgam. The illicit gold buyer himself is at home, or in his office waiting to receive the parcel.

Very often natives are used as carriers by both buyer and seller. The mine worker will send some unsuspecting native to keep an appointment with the agent. The agent, too, will send a native runner to receive the parcel, for if any risks are to be taken, if police and detectives are to be eluded, it is considered better that a black man should have this job.

The illicit gold buyer pays the thief for the amalgam at the rate of ten shillings an ounce. If, for example, he receives a parcel of thirty ounces, he pays over fifteen pounds for this. Then in his secret workroom he smelts the amalgam down, and obtains ten ounces of fine gold, the value of which, at today's price of gold, would be about seventy pounds.

Now, a very large number of illicit gold buyers are small manufacturing jewelers, who use their official license to handle unwrought gold, as a shield against inquiries and interference. Ostensibly their business is that of a manufacturing jeweler. Their premises are small and dingy. Their stocks are cheap and gaudy, and they appear to be battling for a living. Such a *décor* lends itself admirably to the business of deceiving the public and hoodwinking the police. The old jeweler in a torn black coat who shuffles meaninglessly behind a cheap-jack counter is a pathetic figure. A poor, broken old man, trying in his simple, soiled way to make enough money to keep him alive in his last days. But behind all the rings and bracelets and walking-sticks in the shop there lie ounces of pure gold, and the old man is richer than all his sympathizers.

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

The illicit gold buyer who hides behind the profession of manufacturing jeweler will pay fifteen pounds gladly for thirty ounces of amalgam, for when he has smelted it down to pure gold he will then reduce it from fine gold to nine-carat gold, which will bring him a sum of two hundred pounds. Those illicit dealers who do not hide behind a shop-front conceal their smelting apparatus in their kitchens or their back gardens, or in some disused shed. They do not bother to produce nine-carat gold. Either they themselves sell the fine gold to a manufacturing jeweler of bad repute, or else they cast the metal into rough bracelets and necklaces to resemble Indian jewelry, and send it through their agents to the coast, where there is no Gold Law.

At the coast the gold is either made up into nine-carat jewelry, or else it is shipped to India. The huge profits made by the illicit gold buyers enable them to afford a very efficient and well-organized system of agents and runners. A clear and frequent profit of seventy-five per cent can buy a great deal of reliable service, and the I.G.B. man pays well for trustworthy dishonesty.

At the time when the Chamber of Mines had strong reason to suppose that thefts of gold were continually taking place on the fields, the illicit gold buyer was working in his own particular heaven. The police were insignificant and weak enough to prove more stimulating than stultifying. The law was a lame and mangy cat trying feebly to corner active and artful troops of mice. Illicit gold buying was almost as safe and as profitable as its perpetrators claimed. But this Elysium for criminals was not to last. Not only did the police force become more adequate, but the mining houses themselves discovered that it was cheaper to institute their own detective departments than to accept the losses incurred by gold thieves.

Today on the Rand illicit gold buying is still practiced, and practiced profitably. But it is a game for the minority. It is a game of hazards and risks, with long-term imprisonment waiting for the man who slips and falls. The cat is strong and alert. It prowls watchfully. The mice are nervy and easily scared. Occasionally one of them manages to run between the paws of the

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

cat; occasionally one of them gets caught in the sharp strong teeth that wait for it.

Illicit gold buyers are caught by the law in a system of police tests and traps. Activities are started in the usual old-fashioned way by the informer—the man who has quarreled with his confederate. The nark, as they say in England, goes to the police with a detailed account of an illicit concern. He offers, or is induced to offer, an introduction to the illicit dealer. The police have to tread very carefully now. They must be quite sure of their facts before they act. It would not do to arrest some innocent man on the charge of I.G.B. So, at first, they do not attempt to arrest anybody. Instead they perform a series of tests. The informer obligingly introduces the plain-clothes man to the illicit dealer. The informer explains that this is a new customer. The two men talk vaguely but meaningly for a short while. Then the policeman goes away. He has done nothing but talk. He has merely prepared the ground for a test. Soon after he is ready to carry it out.

At the police-station the detective is given a parcel of amalgam, made up to look like the ordinary stolen material. Then all his personal cash is removed from his pockets, and he is ready for the job. He sets off with two other detectives following closely on his heels. They shadow him. They see him enter the workshop, and they wait quietly and unostentatiously for him to come out again.

Presently he appears, and without word or signal walks quickly away. The two detectives follow him to a specified meeting-place. Here the investigating policeman is searched by his two colleagues. If they find gold amalgam in his pockets, the test has failed; but if he has money now instead of amalgam the test is officially successful, and the real business of trapping the dealer can be undertaken.

Trapping is similar to testing in all but the finale. The plain-clothes man sets out a second time with gold amalgam in his pocket. He is confident that he can make a deal again with the illicit gold buyer. This time he is shadowed by detectives who wait outside the workshop. They are waiting now for a signal

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

from their man inside, and when it comes, perhaps in the form of a sneeze or the careless waving of a white handkerchief, they rush inside and arrest the suspected dealer. They search the man who trapped him, and they find money in his pockets; they search the dealer and they find gold amalgam on his bench. Their case is complete.

They caught Old Solomon and a host of others like this. At the top of a tall building in Eloff Street, Arthur Solomon carried on the business of a manufacturing jeweler. He was licensed to handle unwrought gold. His workrooms were small and dingy. He did not appear to do much business. But the police were watching him, and they were trying to trap him.

Old Solomon had been an illicit gold buyer for years, and he was well acquainted with the methods and habits of the police. Four times an innocent-looking man had come into his shop with a parcel of amalgam. Each man had seemed a genuine seller of stolen stuff, but somehow Old Solomon felt disinclined to make a deal. Instinctively he shied away like a sensitive horse. But the fifth time he told himself that he could never make profits by being afraid and temperamental. That was the time they caught him. It had taken them four months to break down the wisdom of Solomon. They rushed in to search his workshop. The benches were stacked with gold amalgam and roughly cast fine gold. The old man stood forlornly in his den watching the police collect evidence for his imprisonment. He lifted a crucible from his work-table and drank the contents thirstily.

It was nitric acid, and Solomon died in the arms of the police.

A foreman in one of the Rand mines was discovered stealing amalgam one day from the reduction-rooms, and when inquiries were made it was found that he had been thieving for years. He was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, and when he had served his term he retired on his fortune. Today that man is a highly respected member of the community, and is an elder of the Church.

Then there is the case of the young and favorite mine worker who was greatly appreciated by his employers, and who gave

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

himself away by buying first a motorcycle, then a house and then a sporting roadster.

There is the story, too, of the poor weedy-looking individual who was stopped by the police at Germiston Station because they thought he might be connected with a case of forgery which they were investigating. But when they searched his house, the police found they had made a mistake about the forgery, for they unearthed the most elaborate amateur smelting apparatus ever discovered on the Reef.

It was left to a sportsman, though, to evolve the idea of buying a gold mine in order to be a successful illicit gold dealer. The mine was in the Northern Transvaal, and he was the sole owner. Each month he deposited a substantial quantity of gold in the banks, and his property was regarded as a good paying concern. The gold was sent to the refinery for purification, and the owner was credited in the ordinary way with the value of the pure gold he had produced.

For many months the mine in the Northern Transvaal continued to prosper, and eager investors began to look toward this part of the country with interest. Then one day the attention of the police was drawn to the fact that the gold which this mine was producing contained osmiridium, a metal which exists only on the Rand, and in no other part of the country. The sportsman was undone. His subtle scheme was uncovered. It was found that this jovial mine owner was buying illicit gold on the Rand, and was passing it through his mills as though it had been won on his own property.

He was making about six thousand pounds a year in this way. His sentence was twelve months, or one hundred pounds. He paid the fine, of course.

The Rand Refinery at Driehoek looks like a large but unpretentious villa, set paradoxically in the middle of the veldt. It is surrounded by a low brick wall, which gives it a tone of half-apologetic reserve. There are none of the broken bottles so often stuck on the crest of a wall by cautious householders. There are

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

no iron spikes or hungry vicious dogs. The building which may be seen quite plainly over the wall is pleasantly gabled in the Colonial style, and there is a broad comfortable veranda in front.

The place, at first, has an inviting air, and its warm red bricks and matching tiles seem to promise an interior comfort and luxury. All this is an illusion. Those low brick walls, the complacent, homely building, the red tiles and the smoking chimneys do not constitute some careless, comfortable concern. They do not invite visitors or trespassers. The Rand Refinery is the collecting-house for all the gold produced on the Rand. It is a great brick safe. It is an unyielding prison.

There is more than a ton of gold produced along the Reef every day. It is mined by the individual companies, and sent to the refinery each day in the form of bullion, but the metal thus obtained in the reduction-rooms of the different mines is not pure gold. It contains about eighty-nine per cent gold, eight per cent silver, and the other three per cent is made up of base metals such as copper, lead, zinc, osmiridium, etc.

This standard of purity would not satisfy the Bank of England, and the bullion must be further refined. In order to obtain the most effective results, a refinery was established in the middle of the Reef some fourteen years ago. It is conducted as a limited liability company, owned by all the different mines on the Rand. A charge is made to each mining house for refining their gold, and any profit which accrues is returned.

The gold is collected each day from every mine by the refinery van—a van plainer than Mr. Drage's most recent effort of indistinction. Inside, however, there is a difference. Three muscular men ride in the lorry. Each one holds a sawed-off shotgun. And for those who might think this is mere play-acting, it would be well for them to know that the guards will shoot on the slightest interference—and shoot straight.

When the van calls at the first mine on the list, the bullion is loaded in the yard under supervision. The bars are handed to the guards, who screw each ingot down between iron clamps under the floor of the car. To make the freight still more secure,

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the floor itself is then locked down over the bullion. The van sets off toward the next mine, and as it pulls out of the yard, advice of its departure is telephoned from the office. If the distance between the two mines can be covered in ten minutes, and if the lorry has not appeared at the second mine within fifteen minutes, the police all along the road are immediately advised.

At Driehoek there are police on guard outside the locked iron gates of the refinery. The visitor, or tourist, who wishes to inspect the buildings must first obtain a permit from the Chamber of Mines in Johannesburg. His name is telephoned to the manager of the refinery, and this, together with a description of the visitor, is communicated to the guards. Once he is inside those low brick walls, the visitor has next to consider getting out, for he may not leave the premises without the permission of the manager. Without this permission the guards will not let him pass.

In the refinery itself all the workmen are locked in the various rooms in which they are employed. The doors leading from each room are locked on the outside, and the employees may not leave their own particular shops on any account whatever, save under armed escort. At the end of the day the workers are not searched, but the amount of gold in the refinery is carefully and accurately checked before they are allowed to leave. At night the refinery is guarded by patrols, and an elaborate and sensitive system of alarms is threaded throughout the property.

Every Wednesday pure gold bullion is packed in the refinery yard for shipment to the Bank of England. There are two bars, each weighing four thousand ounces, packed into every wooden box, and each mail-day dozens of these boxes are loaded into a special rail carriage which has been shunted into the refinery yard. In this carriage there is a strong room with a combination lock.

When all the gold for shipment has been loaded, two guards enter the carriage. They are locked into the train from the outside. They cannot leave the carriage until the train reaches Capetown, thirty-six hours later. When the carriage leaves the refinery, the combination of the strong room—which, incidentally, is altered every week—is telegraphed to the police at Capetown, and when

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

eventually the gold train reaches the port, the guards are released, and the gold is unpacked, and loaded under official supervision into the strong-room of the mail-boat.

With such precautions taken, it is small wonder that the average criminal never attempts to burgle the rich storehouse of the Rand Refinery.

There was once a plan, though, to steal the bullion from the gold train as it traveled to the refinery. It was a plan which came very near to success.

In the year 1923, before the intricate system of guarding the mined gold had been perfected, a consignment of bullion was being sent by train from the New Modder Mine to the refinery at Driehoek. The consignment consisted of nineteen bars of gold, which had been checked and noted down as the bars were packed into the special carriage at the little siding at New Modder. When, however, the train arrived shortly afterward at Germiston Station, four of the gold bars, valued at about twenty thousand pounds, were found to be missing.

The next day a railway ganger working on the line between the two stations was surprised to find a bar of gold lying in the long grass at the side of the track. The other three bars had completely disappeared. Police and detectives set to work with more than their usual determination, for this was a serious crime. If bullion could be stolen with ease and safety, every robber on the Rand would prepare and give effect to schemes for making similar handsome hauls. The Criminal Investigation Department did not hesitate. They arrested four people: a ticket examiner and his wife, a carriage examiner and a miner. They followed this up with further arrests, and gradually the story of the gold train robbery was pieced together.

Plans of the theft had been conceived in detail some time before the crime was committed. Arrangements for stealing the gold had been well organized, and had it not been that the grass which grew on the side of the railway line was long and luxuriant, the story of the gold-train robbery must have ended differently. The thieves had arranged that the bullion should be thrown out of



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

the train onto the track at a deserted spot. There it would be picked up by two of the gang, who would take it by car to an appointed house in Vrededorp.

The scheme, at first, was carried out without a hitch. Four bars of gold were thrown from the train as it traveled toward Driehoek. Two men were waiting in a car at the side of the road. But when the train had passed, and the confederates went to look for the gold, they could not find any trace of it in the long grass at the side of the track. Thinking that there had been some mishap, they went back to town. But that afternoon they were informed by an accomplice that the plan had been carried out as arranged. The two men jumped into their car and drove to the appointed place, and there, as the sun was setting, they found three bars of gold. It was too late now, and too dark to discover the last bar, and they decided to leave it until the next day. As their car neared town they pulled it off the road and stopped. In the dark of a moonless night the stolen bullion was removed from the back seat of the blue sedan, and was carefully packed into a wheelbarrow. Few people noticed anything strange in seeing two well-dressed men trundling a wheelbarrow through the busy streets of Johannesburg, toward the vicinity of Vrededorp.

A month after the robbery no sign of the missing gold had been found. It was generally believed, by that time, that the thieves had already smelted the bullion down, and had cast it into rough jewelery, which was probably on its way now to illicit gold buyers in India. If this were so, the thieves were safe, and for them the gold-train robbery must be counted a great success.

But the police persisted. They interviewed dozens of suspects, and made hundreds of inquiries. One day they stumbled across a member of the gang who, feeling aggrieved, was willing to talk.

On a March afternoon a train standing in Germiston Station was on the point of leaving for the coast when the platform was suddenly crowded with police officers. They hurried up and down the line of carriages, poking their official heads into every compartment. They seemed to be searching for one particular passenger. Then a little knot of uniforms gathered at the rear of

## EVOLUTION OF SWINDLING

the train. The police had found the man they were looking for. He was an Indian—a protesting, gesticulating Indian. They seized his luggage, which was addressed to an obscure town in India, and they began to examine the trunks and suitcases. They found nothing. The trunk contained a few pieces of silk and some light articles of clothing. One of the officers snapped back the lock disgustedly and began to lift the box back on the train. It was surprisingly heavy. The policeman was puzzled. A few lengths of silk, some shirts and socks did not warrant this weight. He pulled the trunk back on to the platform, opened it, and began to tap the fiber walls professionally. The sound was heavy and muffled. He ripped the striped calico lining away from the bottom of the box, and there, neatly packed between strips of wood, were thinly molded slabs of gold.

The whole trunk was reinforced with stolen gold. There were thirty slabs of it, especially molded to fit round the sides and base of this innocent-looking fiber trunk. The rest of the missing bullion was found in the stable of a house in Vrededorp. Two men did eighteen months' hard labor in the Johannesburg prison for the gold-train robbery. The grass had been too long for them.

Today the bold dramatic ways of the old-time swindler are lost. Although the effects achieved are almost the same, there is nothing picturesque or daring about their origin. It is more a matter of manipulation and maneuver than straightforward crime. It is more a matter of pretending, without actually saying so, that gold exists where there is none. It is a manipulation of share-buying and selling, and a persuasive appearance of sincerity. It is rare, but it is still swindling.

Why, there are men today in Johannesburg—

## CHAPTER XI

### SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

ACCORDING TO THE NURSERY PHILOSOPHY RELATIVE TO CHOCOLATES and cream cakes, all good things come to an end. So it was, or so it seemed to be, with the gold of the Witwatersrand. More than forty years of blasting and crushing, of hauling and hammering, began to tell on the speckled gold sheet which had dipped untouched for centuries into the Ridge that divided the White Waters of the Transvaal. The activities of the people who had come in search of gold had weakened the rich resources of the earth; their instruments had prized open the golden treasure-box; their hands had lifted out the most valuable of its contents. They had left behind empty gaps, and gaping holes, black squares of darkness to mark, negatively, the places where once gold had existed.

Forty years of energetic progress by man and his machinery will destroy much in a program of creation and production. The vast sheet of conglomerate had yielded up its richest treasures under the compulsion of drill and dynamo for so long.

There must be an end.

It was in 1929 that the end of the Witwatersrand Gold Reef was in sight. That year the Government Mining Engineer, in an estimate prepared for the Gold Delegation to the Financial Committee to the League of Nations, prophesied that the output of gold from the Transvaal would reach its peak in the year 1932 with a total production of forty-three million, eight hundred thousand pounds worth of metal. After that, production values would drop steadily, until, in 1940, the yield would have dwindled to ten million pounds.

It was a drab, but statistical, forecast of the decline of some great splendor. Many of the mines which had opened the life of the

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

Rand would be dead by then; they would have been worked to a standstill, and only their derelict, rotting shaft-heads would live a little longer to tell silently of past glories. Soon, as the years moved on relentlessly, other mines along the Reef would close their gates to the bands of active, strong-limbed workers; the sounds of battery and crusher would be muffled and then stilled, and in the end, perhaps, the Rand would be no more than a sign-post of history and a meeting-place of the four winds of the earth.

Such was the picture conjured up by the words of the Government Mining Engineer. He did not say, nor would he say, that the Rand would dwindle and die because there was no gold left. There was plenty. There would be plenty for many years. But it was too thin, too widely scattered, to be payable. It occurred weakly in the great mass of rock under the ground. It could not yield enough profit to cover the costs of mining. It was what they called low-grade ore.

The amount of gold deposited on the speckled conglomerate of the Reef varies very widely, not only from mine to mine, but also within the boundaries of each mine itself. In some places there might be eight or ten pennyweights of gold to the ton of rock. A few yards away there might be no more than one or two pennyweights. There would perhaps be great obstructing regions with no gold at all.

During the forty years of its life the Rand had naturally mined all the richest ore first, making gold while the sun still shone, and leaving the poor-quality rock on one side like a bad debt.

But all good things come to an end.

So the rich reserves of the Rand began to peter out, and only the despised low-grade ore was left in any quantity. The world price of gold at that time was a little under eighty-five shillings an ounce, and the absolute limit of payability on the Reef was a yield of four and one-half pennyweights a ton. Anything less than this could only be worked at a loss. Despite the efficiency of mining methods and the thoroughness and competence of the Rand organizations, operating costs on the mines could not be reduced far enough to make it possible to work the low-grade ore,

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

and this, on the majority of properties, was the only standard of quality left.

In 1930 the Witwatersrand was in an unhappy position. It cost nineteen shillings to mine every ton of ore, and this figure excluded all possibility of working the great bulk of the low-grade ore in the mines. The authorities were faced with the same considerations that led to the Rand Revolt in 1922. Unless the price of gold was increased, or working costs reduced, the industry could not continue. The price of gold was regulated by international forces, and could not be altered by the commercial desires of any individual country. To tamper with working costs was to interfere with wages and conditions of labor, and this, as everyone knew, would be not only dangerous, but disastrous.

The following year, in 1931, a Low-Grade Ore Commission was appointed by the Government to inquire into the position. It met to consider the question of granting subsidies to the low-grade mines. Subsidizing the Witwatersrand: subsidizing what had been, until then, the richest stretch of ground in the world. It was almost ironical.

The evidence given before this Commission by the Gold Producers' Committee showed that a reduction of two shillings in the cost of working every ton of ore would lead to a fifty per cent increase in the life of the Witwatersrand; a reduction of four shillings would more than double the life of the mines.

But before the Government Commission had had time to give its findings on the claims of the mining industry, an event occurred which outweighed in importance all local considerations.

Great Britain abandoned the gold standard.

The month was September and the year was 1931.

There followed in South Africa a time of complete chaos. At first the great bulk of people who had never heard of the gold standard could not readily understand what its abandonment meant, and when, as a duty, they gave their opinion on the position, they all supported the devil they knew, and agreed that South Africa at least should adhere, as formerly, to this gold-standard business. Gradually, however, the voices of the people who did

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

understand the position were heard above the din of consternation and perplexity; and loud among such voices of economic intelligence was that of the gold-mining industry.

The powerful organization of the industry and expert guidance of the Chamber of Mines was conscious now of the immense importance of its place in South African affairs, and was accordingly conservative in the opinions it uttered. In the beginning the gold-mining industry approved the Government's program of inaction. It was thought wiser to wait and see what happened than actually to make anything happen. The outlook, said the President of the Chamber of Mines, "was most uncertain and obscure. It appeared sensible for South Africa not to take precipitate action, but to put to the test, on the one hand, the ability of South Africa to remain on the gold standard, and to see, on the other hand, the degree of stability attaching to sterling, the following of which presented the only practical alternative to remaining on gold standard."

While gold remained in international demand, and there seemed no reason why it should not continue to hold such a position of command and demand, the safety of the industry itself was not threatened. The problem occurred only in discovering the best plan of action. Many of the foremost authorities of the country held that it were better to adhere to the gold standard rather than purposely participate in the risk of a collapse of international currency. Again, it was assumed that the abandonment of the gold standard would be followed by an increase of costs which would cancel out the beneficial effects of a premium, while an adherence to the gold standard would eventually bring about a reduction of costs in the industry, including that of gold-mining.

But while the leaders of economic opinion were still arguing with each other as to the best procedure to be followed for the good of South Africa, the country itself had fallen into a shocking state of commercial confusion. The acrobatics of the exchange rates had induced a situation of disastrous disorder. The average man was now able to send his money to England at an enormous profit, and people who had idle cash took full advantage of this position,

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

with the result that the country was rapidly drained of its wealth.

On the other hand, the legitimate business man, the importer and exporter, could not collect payments from overseas except at a huge loss. Both commerce and, worst of all, agriculture suffered heavy damage, and in their fall they threatened to carry with them the whole fabric of economic and industrial activity. The gold mines, in a position less precarious than any other industry, viewed the destruction with alarm; for, as they were always the biggest taxpayers in the country, they sensed that they would be invited, with the undeniable persuasion of increased taxation, to repair the damage.

And in any case, by this time the Chamber of Mines had already decided that South Africa should abandon the gold standard. Despite the power and influence of this body of gold producers, the Government of the country did not obey. It was only some months later when Parliament, forced by the calamitous condition of the Treasury, had decided for itself, that South Africa abandoned the gold standard. The month was December, and the year 1932.

Almost immediately the price of gold began to rise, and within a few months the biggest boom this country of fluctuations had ever known had started. The price of gold continued to rise, and it jumped from eighty-five shillings an ounce to the unprecedented figure of one hundred forty-eight shillings and ten pennyweights.

With South Africa's abandonment of the gold standard the history of the Rand gold mines was completely altered. Instead of facing the unhappy prospect of a declining and withering old age, with one sweep of the pen, with one decree of the Government, this industry was presented with another hundred years of vigorous life. With gold at one hundred forty shillings an ounce, the Rand could at last mine its low-grade ore at a profit.

This increase in the selling price of their commodity meant that the industry, without reducing its working costs, could afford to handle rock containing no more than two and seven-tenths pennyweights of gold to the ton. Such a large drop in the margin of payability opened up almost a new goldfield to the Rand, for

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

it brought within the reach of the mine owners all those vast acres of rock which had been left alone as worthless. They were not even called upon to be unduly clever and skillful in order to get the best results out of this surprising new gift. They merely had to crush the rock, all rock, any rock which was gold-bearing, and to wait for the profits to roll in.

The peak period of production on the Witwatersrand goldfields before the abandonment of the gold standard was in the year 1932, when the weight of ore milled amounted to thirty-four million, four hundred sixty-six thousand, seven hundred fifty tons, and the value of this at the old price of gold was forty-six million, six hundred seventy-one thousand, two hundred fifty-eight pounds. Under the new prices ruling in 1934 an additional four million, six hundred seventy-three thousand, one hundred fifty tons were milled, but this ore, being of low-grade quality, gave a yield which was less by one million, one hundred twenty-seven thousand, six hundred sixty-two ounces than the output of the two years before. The benefit of high prices, however, successfully made up for the reduced yield, which, incidentally, was in no way accidental, for the value of the gold produced in the year 1934 rose to seventy-one million, five hundred ninety-eight thousand, nine hundred forty pounds.

Thus, soon after South Africa abandoned the gold standard an automatic profit of twenty-four million, nine hundred twenty-seven thousand, six hundred eighty-two pounds was put into the pockets of the Rand mines. It did not rest as an intact bonus for long; for as the profits of the mines increased so did the taxation imposed by the Government increase, and the strip of land which was once contemptuously known as Rotten Reef came handsomely to the aid of its country in a time of debits and deficits.

At the beginning of the financial year 1933-34 there was an accumulated deficit in the national accounts of one million, nine hundred fourteen thousand pounds. At the end of that year the Minister of Finance announced a gross surplus in the national account of six million, four hundred twenty-four thousand pounds.

Although, as a rule, Government Ministers are not publicly



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

grateful to any individual industry, no matter how helpful it may have proved, and although the South African Government was usually only lukewarm in its praise of the Rand, whose influence and power it vaguely resented and whose excellent organization put many a Government department to shame, the Ministers could not, and cannot, deny the benefits gained by the whole country from the expansion of the Rand.

The Government derived direct revenue from the gold mines under three distinct headings. There was first the revenue gained from lease contracts, under which system individual mining companies lease the mineral rights of Government ground. This is not exactly taxation, but is more comparable with rent. Then there is the normal income tax paid by the gold mines on their profits in just the same way as other income-making organizations. Gold mines pay income tax at the rate of four shillings in the pound, while the diamond-mining companies pay three shillings in the pound and other companies two shillings and six penny-weights in the pound. The method of obtaining revenue is by means of the Excess Profits Duty which was imposed after South Africa left the gold standard.

Just before the Budget discussion in May, 1933, the whole of the Witwatersrand was wondering what form the Government's new taxation plans would take, and how far it would go. The Minister of Finance soon put them out of their misery of doubt and plunged them into a miserable certainty. He indicated that the Government intended to appropriate approximately half the premium—that was, half the amount resulting from the increase in the price of gold from four pounds five shillings an ounce to seven pounds.

In the Government fiscal year ended in March, 1933, the yield from the normal income tax on gold mines was one million, eight hundred thousand pounds, while the revenue from leased mines was approximately two million, five hundred thousand pounds. Naturally, with the additional profits made by the industry, the yield both from normal income tax and from leases rose considerably, so that by the following year the normal income tax

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

had provided the Government with the almost doubled amount of three million, seven hundred thousand pounds, while the leases provided four million, nine hundred thousand pounds. In addition to all this, the yield from the newly imposed Excess Profits Acts amounted to six million pounds. To take it a year further forward, in 1934 the Government received by way of taxation and rent more than thirteen million pounds, an increase of no less than nine million pounds, or nearly two hundred thirteen per cent, over the taxation revenue of 1932.

Quite apart from taxation and leases, huge sums of money go to the State coffers under a scheme of profit-sharing, by which many gold mines, including such properties as New State Areas, Sub-Nigel, East Geduld, Daggafontein, and Government Gold-mining Areas, conduct their operations on land leased from the Union Government on conditions providing for a share of profits to the State. The percentage of profits payable varies. In one property it reaches the extraordinary maximum of sixty-seven and five-tenths per cent. Since this system of profit-sharing was introduced the Government has made approximately thirty-three million pounds; of this amount one mine—Government Gold Mining Areas—has contributed more than twenty-one million pounds. This, it should be clear, is a thing apart from taxation.

The speeches ranging round the Excess Profits Acts in the budget debate of 1933 indicated that many members throughout the House were of the opinion that the heaviness of the Government's taxation demands was likely to be temporary, so that Parliament would need to budget in the year for the complete cancellation of its substantial accumulated deficit, and would also need to place itself in funds for the purpose of embarking upon the rehabilitation of farming and other depressed industries. The welfare of agriculture was particularly important, as the great bulk of farmers were those voters who had put the Nationalist Government under General Hertzog into power.

The Government ideas on the Excess Profits Duty were quite candidly based on the contention that the State should by right, and as a matter of title, receive a large proportion of the increased

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

profits of the mines, and that its receipts should not be limited only to those sums necessary to cover its requirements. Toward the close of the debate, the Acting Minister of Finance, Mr. Patrick Duncan, gave the country an important undertaking in the House of Assembly.

"The Government," he said, "is not prepared to reduce the amount provided for during the current year below the amount of six million pounds which they estimated for, and which, as I have said, will be the maximum. Six million pounds, and not more than that, is what the Government intends to get from the Excess Profits Duty. In order to give those interested in the industry, or those who contemplate taking an interest, a certain safeguard, the percentage for future years will not run into higher figures than those I have just indicated. The Government is prepared to give this assurance, that for the next financial year, 1934-35, it will not take by way of taxation from the excess profits earned by the industry during the calendar year more than seven million, four hundred thousand pounds; that is to say, it will not take more than it is getting this year by way of Excess Profits Duty, plus income tax on the profits. . . .

"In addition to that, the Government is prepared to give the assurance—which, of course, will be binding upon itself, but naturally cannot bind a Government that may come after it—that, as far as it is concerned, for three years after the next financial year it will not, for services of any financial year, take by way of taxation more than 50 per cent of the excess profits during the calendar year, to which the taxation of that year will apply. That undertaking, of course, does not apply to ordinary rates of income tax and other taxation which may be levied on other profits of the mining industry, or any other industry, but the intention is—and that intention will be carried out—that as regards these profits, not more than 50 per cent will be taken during the next three years."

So far as the yield is concerned, this undertaking embodies the position at the time of writing.

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

Now, the scale of taxation imposed on the various mines is worked out on a complicated formula which practically nobody understands. It is based on the grade of ore handled, and it applies unevenly to the various mines of the Rand. The result was that after the Excess Profits Duty was imposed some mines were able to declare almost double their previous dividends, while others were unable to increase their dividends at all. Even today only those people who have spent long hours of concentration on this highly involved formula are able to decipher its meaning at all, and there are naturally a number of people who maintain, with probably more than a hint of political prejudice, that the Government authors understand it least of all.

The mines themselves were playing an extraordinary game of mouse to the Government's cat. They, too, mined to a formula. They milled only the exact amount of high-grade ore necessary to produce an estimated and unsensational return. If, for example, some mines struck particularly rich ground, they would probably either leave it alone altogether, or else mix it up with a quantity of rubbish in order to keep the grade down, and thus defeat the Government's taxation plans.

One manager on the Rand studied the formula carefully, then reorganized his whole working program, and legitimately cheated the Government of several hundreds of thousands of pounds.

There is much to be said, of course, for the argument that the mines, the greatest profit-making industry in the country, should be taxed to keep other industries alive. But the complicated system of working the formula has proved a mistake, and the consensus of opinion in Johannesburg was that the Government should be allowed to take its extra profit a year, but that this should be obtained by imposing a flat rate of taxation all along the Reef.

When these notes were written it seemed more than likely that such a proposal for the more simplified working of the tax proposals would be effected in the immediate future.

The incidence of mining taxation on the Rand has been dealt with in this book in such detail because it forms so important a part of the activities of the Rand, and because Johannesburg and

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

that strip of Ridge are not alone in taking an interest in the prices of shares and the values of the dividends. The progress of the Rand, its obstacles and victories, has become a matter of international interest, which is vividly reflected in the stock-markets of the world.

The most spectacular manifestation of this boom, which was a king boom in a country of many booms, occurred on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Within the short space of five months, from the end of December, 1932, to May, 1933, the value of the shares of the Witwatersrand mining industry rose by more than one hundred per cent.

Johannesburg was gripped by the share mania. The town went temporarily mad. Everybody—men, women and minors—rushed frenziedly toward the Stock Exchange. People of financial consequence bought heavy parcels of high-priced and reputable scrip, and waited for its value to bound up. A day, perhaps two days, and they had made a great profit. People of no financial importance plunged blindly into a sea of small-priced stock. They bought shares at five shillings, eight shillings, ten shillings, and waited for the value to leap up. A day, perhaps two days, and they had made a great profit. Men stood all day long on the steps of the Exchange buying shares, selling them half an hour later at a profit, buying in again, selling— At High Change, the arena of brokers, noisy enough by ordinary standards in times of depression or stagnation, was now a furious chaos of shouting and yelling.

Great masses of brokers, wedged tight together, shoulder to shoulder, cheek to cheek, swayed from one side of the floor to the other as reinforcements on the outside edge tried to push, punch, scratch and worm their way into the foaming, bubbling, boiling center.

“I buy—buy—buy——”

Occasionally some shout more stentorian than the rest would issue up from the lurching Babel; and then the man who had been heard to utter those fateful words would be set upon by a mob

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

of howling, shrieking bodies, like footpads descending on a passing traveler, like a well-trained rugger team falling on a leather ball.

Elderly gentlemen with gray hair and a carnation in the button-hole, who had carried on the business of broking with honorable distinction for many years, were pummeled and punched, pushed and shoved, torn and tattered once they were caught up in the swirling mass of dealers, and when this happened they were trapped in a prison of closely fitting bodies. Blue waistcoats, brown jackets, patent-leather shoes, hobnailed brogues, thick necks, thin necks, red ties, yellow ties, pince-nez, horn-rims——

"I buy—*buy*—BUY——"

A fresh onslaught, a new and more forceful attack as the bunched brokers came bearing down the floor, struggling and gasping, onward, forward, to be stopped only by the antlered, be-trophied walls.

Upstairs in the little box-like offices which honeycombed the Stock Exchange buildings, the demand, though more gentle, was no less insistent. Cables from London, from New York, from Paris—long-distance calls, local calls, telegrams, clients in person, clients by proxy.

Buy—buy—buy——

Young men who were yesterday licking stamps on brokers' envelopes were today executing important orders. Beautiful women in sable coats were helping their husbands with the typing; the office boy was interviewing prospective purchasers.

Buy—buy—buy——

All day long the hungry roar went on, and it calmed only with the dawn, when the lights in the brokers' offices were switched out, when the last cable for the preceding day had been dealt with, and when tired men went in search of a coffee-stall before returning to face a new day of share mania.

There were big fortunes made in those frenzied weeks. Shares rose like rockets catapulted into the sky. King Midas came to Johannesburg, and visited ten thousand homes, ten thousand offices; and even the typist with spots on her face and a few pounds

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

was lucky at last. Any stock that anyone touched turned to gold. Men went to bed worth one thousand pounds on Monday night; they did not go to bed at all on Wednesday night, for they were worth ten thousand pounds. Clerks mortgaged their motorbikes, workmen mortgaged their cottages, wives pawned their jewelry, and everyone who could borrowed money to buy scrip.

Johannesburg was a spinning roulette-board, and everybody had made their play on the yellow.

The quick fortunes to be won so easily, the incessant talk of money, the Midas touch, induced a spirit of optimism, and aggravated the already keen gambling instincts of the Rand. Thus, when new companies were floated, the public scarcely waited to read the prospectus before they swarmed to buy up the shares.

Within the first six months of 1933, no less than forty-two new gold-mining companies were registered, and every subsequent week brought its batch of fresh prospectuses. A great number of these concerns had no excuse for existence, apart from a sort of touch-wood optimism and the encouragement of an excited and jubilant public. Many of these companies declared that their object was to exploit the Reef, and they sincerely hoped, though they did not declare this, that they would be lucky.

Johannesburg, like every good gambler, has always believed in playing up its winnings, and there was no lack of support for those new companies who were overcapitalized with faith and hope. The idea itself of exploiting the Reef was a good one, for the golden vein of conglomerate stretching from east to west had, some years before, come to a halt. The rim of gold which had dipped unbrokenly into the Ridge of the White Waters for sixty miles for the early miners had stopped abruptly, disappearing on the east into a bed of coal shale, and on the west into a heavy blanket of dolomites.

The unanswered riddle of the Lost Gold Reef forms today the greatest speculative subject of the Rand. Whether the old richness of the Reef continues, and if it does, where it may be found, are problems that have absorbed the greatest engineering brains

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

of the time, and many millions of money. There are those who maintain that the sheet of gold-bearing ore exists only in its known form, and that when it stops at Randfontein on the west and Sub-Nigel on the east, it stops forever. There is no more, they say. There can be no birth of a new Reef, but only a gradual dying of the old.

Other men with reputations equally important maintain that the unfinished rim of gold which has made its appearance along the Ridge is but a peeping proof, an uncovered edge of greater bulk, like a saucer buried in soft sand with only a fraction of its china rim revealed to indicate its position. Indeed, this saucer simile is one held in great respect by more than one engineer. It forms a theory which has lately become of great importance and popularity in the mining world.

To grasp the implications of the puzzle, it is necessary first to imagine a saucer stuck into the ground at a sharp angle. Part of the edge or the rim is left showing; it is but a small part—that, the theory goes, is the Reef as it is known today. The rest of the saucer has yet to be found. Mining from the exposed edge into the ground has proved that the saucer, although cracked here and there, is intact, and that its concave surface may be followed as far as man and machinery can go.

Now, the theorists maintain that the saucer simile holds true in every detail; that is to say, leading engineers on the Rand believe today that the gold-bearing body of rock dips concavely into the earth for some distance, and then, after the flat of the saucer has been reached, it curves up again. Indeed, so strong is the support for this expert speculation, that companies have been formed to search for the Lost Gold Reef over the borders of the Transvaal in the Orange Free State, where it is hoped that the opposite edge of the saucer will be found curving up. Most mining houses of repute, however, like nervous bathers, prefer to hang on to the ropes they already know, rather than wade out into deep uncertain seas. They are not, it is true, too nervous to spend money in searching for an extension of the Reef, which, if found, would mean more, many times more, than an ordinary fortune; but



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

in their search they choose to work close to the known sections of the Reef. They prefer to follow the dipping sides of the saucer, rather than look in the vast wilderness of the Orange Free State for the other side—the opposite edge. Thus, the great bulk of money which has been spent in exploratory work centers round the extreme limits of the Rand: on the west in the country surrounding Randfontein Estates, on the east in the land which edges about Sub-Nigel.

Much of the profit that the mining houses have made since the abandonment of the gold standard has been spent in exploring new territory and searching for the Lost Gold Reef. Much of the profit made by the public on the rise of shares since the abandonment of the gold standard has been lost in supporting the less reputable but more ambitious seekers. Small, struggling men have hopes just as vivid and enchanting as the dreams of the millionaire, and small mining concerns have hoped just as fervently as the rich houses to find the Lost Reef.

If there be any consolation in losing money—and in Johannesburg this is doubtful—it is for the speculator to know that he risked his pounds or his shillings on the greatest gamble the world has ever known—a gamble which, if it had proved successful, would not only have been called an exhibition of brilliant foresight and unparalleled genius, but, more important still, would have brought in a harvest of pure gold.

Up till now the gamble of the Lost Gold Reef has given little else but negative results. Occasionally in the search gold will be found in sporadic quantities; sometimes it may even occur in off-shoots which can be worked with a small margin of profit. But the great rich Gold Reef of the Rand remains a riddle.

If it does persist, this has yet to be proved; the other half, the other four-fifths of the saucer, remain buried.

All through the history of the Witwatersrand, from the very earliest days, the men most nearly connected with the Reef—the men who knew it most and understood it best—have always maintained, in a voice of confidence and certainty, that the goldfields of South Africa have only been gently tapped. They have said,

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

more than once, that there is more wealth lying locked in the earth of the Transvaal than was ever taken out of it.

So the search goes on. The boom of 1933 did much to speed up the hunt, for a large proportion of the money that was made then has been sent back into the earth once more in shafts and bore-holes.

Somewhere else in this book it has been said that gold-mining is not a poor man's profession. The search for the Lost Gold Reef is an experiment which eats up vast sums of money. The reward for such expenditure would be more than handsome. But it does seem that such riches can be won only by the rich man.

That is if—if the Lost Gold Reef is ever found.

The search, like a debate in the House of Commons, continues.

Johannesburg today is the center, the heart, of an industry which has produced in the brief span of fifty years one billion, two hundred million pounds' worth of gold, if the value be reckoned on the old price of gold, or two billion pounds' worth of gold under present values. It is a fine bold city, held in a clamp by the ring of white mountains that have been thrown up by a generation of men who have spent their daylight hours boring and tunneling into the dark earth in pursuit of yellow metal.

These glistening dumps, these man-made mountains, present a permanent background to the town. They are silhouetted against every Johannesburg sky; in the occasional gray days they are bleak and comfortless; under the brilliance of a more usual blue sky they are vivid and strangely garish guides. The fine white sands which have been piled up laboriously, truckload by truckload, once formed the solid hardness of that dipping sheet of Reef. But the roaring, stamping crushers, and the biting, disintegrating cyanide have transformed the obstinate granite into soft yielding powder. It is worthless now that it has given up its gold—it is a rubbish-dump for the rocky refuse of the mines. And yet these tamed hills still carry a trace of gold, so fine, so unsubstantial, that it is more a sign of the man-made mountains for their past glories than a commercial proposition.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Just at the very end, the crushed, battered rock, the sands and slimes, refused to part with their identity. They withstood every onslaught; they clung tenaciously to that final poor personality. Even the great hungry tanks of cyanide could not remove from them the last vestige of gold. Thus the white dumps of the Rand proclaim their history silently to a passing, unheeding world. The gold they hold is so minute that no one bothers. And it is only on a day of windy violence that the bleak unnatural hills, stretching for a hundred miles from Randfontein on the west to Sub-Nigel on the east, assert themselves and recapture for a few brief hours their former importance.

Then the dust flies off the slopes in angry clouds and sweeps stingingly over the roofs of the town below, carrying malevolent particles of phthisis, which make men cough and choke as the tears stream from their eyes. The little grains of white sand are brittle and sharp, and on the wings of the wind they search out the warmth of a human lung, the comfort of a soft throat.

When the force of the flying clouds is spent, the sand falls into the gutters of the streets, and it is then that the pavements of Johannesburg are proverbially lined with gold. Once again the white mountains are quiet, and the men that made them turn back to tame their work. They pour water—gallons and gallons of water—onto the dumps to damp the spirit of the dust and to stop the flight of phthisis. Day after day the water trickles down the dumped slopes, and in its course it pocks and furrows the surfaces, making picturesque white Alps and brazen Andes out of the old rubbish-dumps.

Below them the people of the city of Johannesburg are alert and quick-stepped. They pride themselves, with justification, on their progressiveness, and their activity. They pride themselves, with justification, on the great strides their city has made in fifty years. It is now the largest and most important town in the Union, the London of South Africa.

And yet, it was only fifty years ago that the Ridge of the White Waters was a barren strip of windswept veldt.

It is very different now, for since that time two billion pounds



Rand landscape with a background of man made mountains—or made dumps.



## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

have been taken out of the same earth. The buildings that line the smooth asphalt streets are tall symbols of brick modernity. They rear upward sharply, cutting impatiently into the horizon of dumps. They enclose behind discreet windows all the latest and newest devices for human comfort, whether it be commercial or domestic luxury.

The pavements below are thronged with beautiful women, who are able to buy from the city stores the most recent fashion in both clothes and cosmetics. The roads are crowded with America's most expensive automobiles, and the men who drive them smoke cigars and wear buttonholes, and often forget to notice the robot.

Everyone moves quickly, not only out of the way of the traffic, but also along the pavements and into the comparative safety of the buildings. There is business to be done, and it must always be done at once. It is here that Johannesburg will never be another London. It is too young, too quick, too eager. There is none of the slow dignity of England about this town. There is no "We will let you know in due course, sir," or, "If you will communicate with us at your earliest convenience, madam," or "We would esteem it a favor if you would get in touch with our representatives." Such impressive procrastination is as unknown in Johannesburg as the Codex Sinaiticus. If there is anything to be done—and there always is—it must be done immediately. Not this afternoon, nor tomorrow, nor next week; but now.

The town is still young, and its virility is that of a young ambitious man to whom anything is possible and everything is worth attempting. This is no place for old habits or old conventions; only old men have an easy time. That is why, if a building is to be constructed or a frock bought, it is always the latest and very newest of its kind.

Energy, coupled with money, laughs at the idea of impossibility. Johannesburg is separated by thousands of miles of mountains, desert and sea from the rest of the progressive world; and yet all this world has to offer is within its reach, and this new town, younger by centuries than the far-off cities of the world, is more progressive.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

There is not a new cocktail, a new dance, a new coiffeur that does not come to Johannesburg. There is no price it will not pay to sample the wares of the world. There is no cost that will prevent it keeping the best, the latest, the newest, the biggest, to decorate its homes, fill its larders, equip its life.

The homes of the Johannesburg people are lovely houses built on the sides of the kopjes, sweeping down into the valleys, enclosing tennis courts, marking off golf courses, edging the spacious grounds of one or another country club. And when quick night falls without waiting for a twilight, Johannesburg homes are brightly lighted places for dinner-parties, where the liqueur might often be a clear white drink in which fine pieces of pure gold hang in suspension until the glass is lifted and the drink with its decorative metal is swallowed. Gold liqueur. A symbol. In the town there are cinemas which are more modern, more luxurious than any in London, there are night clubs and poker parties.

Johannesburg prides itself, with justification, on its modernity and progressiveness. But though the outward shell is new, the heart is middle-aged—fifty years of age. The spirit of those early days when the Rand was first found to hold gold still stalks along the Ridge.

The gambler, the seeker after money, the millionaire, the parasite, are still here. The game they play is yet the same. The crowd that used to hang round Barney Barnato's Stock Exchange congregates now instead outside the newer buildings in Hollard Street. The men who used to fog the air at the lamplit music-halls take their wives now to the cinema. The men who rode quick horses over the rough veldt carrying news of market movements are the same men who now have chauffeurs to drive their cars, and clerks to take information. The men who came to make money have stayed to make more.

Johannesburg is older now than it was then. It is newer. But it is no different. There is the same restless impermanency in the atmosphere now as there was then. The same atmosphere of gambling persists through the years. Perhaps it is even stronger today; for everywhere, in every street, in every office, in every

## SEARCH FOR THE LOST GOLD REEF

house, the talk is of stocks, of dividends, of horse-races, of poker hands. To live in Johannesburg is to live in a dice-box; every throw is a gamble; the sixes might always turn up.

The very winds that blow are the winds of chance which sweep away the misgivings of older cities and scatter instead a penetrating dust of optimism which blinds the men who step outside and stings them into a state of exhilaration. There is none of the gloom in this town which hangs about the hearts of other places. If a man should lose his job today he is not stricken down with the desperate fears that fall upon the average luckless fellow; for in a town like Johannesburg, where fortunes are made overnight, a job needs no throwing of sixes, because twos will win.

When the fortunes which are made overnight are lost the next morning, the men who were magnates have no time to fret. They must take up the dice-box again. So it goes on. Priests and vicars, cobblers and butchers, bus conductors and cooks, shop assistants and ledger clerks, all circle and wheel in great flights round the gambles of Johannesburg. They call it "having a little flutter." Most of them flutter like eagles in the direction of the Stock Exchange.

Curiously enough, although the powerful and impressive offices of the Chamber of Mines stand directly opposite the Stock Exchange buildings, few people seem conscious that the actual business of mining has much to do with market prices. It is, of course, a well-known fact that the profits or losses made by any individual mine regulate in some strange way the values of its dividends. But although Hollard Street is the economic nerve-center of the town, few, if any, of the people who swarm along its pavements have any notion of what a stope or a winze may mean; while the various processes involved in milling the ore are regarded nervously by the general public as mysterious and unintelligible technicalities reserved for people with high foreheads and deep brows.

Indeed, the tourist who has the inimitable experience of being entertained by a circle of stockbrokers is certain to address a rapt



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

and fascinated audience when he describes his visit down a gold mine.

It is money that matters, not the way it is produced. It is money that matters here far more than anything else. Barney Barnato believed that money was power. His successors of today hold to this doctrine firmly. And so fifty years have made little difference in the aims and objects of the Rand. Those hurrying, well-shod feet, those racing engines, those impatient telephone bells are doing no more today than the wagon wheels, the relay riders and whiskied conferences of the old days. They were driving toward the same object. Inwardly it is all the same as it was.

Even the rumble of antagonism between the Dutch and the English lives on to tell of past thunder. Despite the worthiest efforts of General Smuts and General Hertzog, despite the recent fusion of the two great political parties, there is still the bloody Dutchman and the god-damned red-neck. But with the employment of reason, good sense and intelligence, this vestige of the past, at least, should disappear and be swallowed up in the pages of the future history. Both the great leaders of the country, both Smuts and Hertzog, once bitter enemies and fomenters of the racial hatred which has split apart the two white races of South Africa for so long, have now gripped hands, and are beckoning to their followers to imitate them in a splendid gesture. Both the Dutchman and the Englishman in South Africa are fine men. Each has his patriotic emotions. Each stands side by side on the same fair land.

Tradition has taught each one to stand alone and scowl. But more than once tradition has been a false malicious teacher, and South Africa, poor in years of history but rich in mistakes, has discovered yet another fault in the foundations laid by its fathers.

The day that Boer and Briton will face each other as true friends—that day, and not before, will South Africa be a really great country.

Already over the hills and kopjes of the veldt the first clear lights of dawn are breaking.

## CHAPTER XII

### AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

IT IS A PENNY TRAM-RIDE FROM THE CITY HALL OF JOHANNESBURG to the property known as Robinson Deep. The main road, with its buses and motor-cars, sweeps unconcernedly past the white dumps which slope down on to the very edge of the street, making what is no more than a dreary commercial route seem like an exciting adventure amid some foreign snow-bound peaks. Occasionally the soft blank surfaces of the dumps are broken of their barrenness by trees growing straight and stalwart from their sprawling roots which are buried in cyanide soil. The houses which burst through the ring of dumps every now and then are little grimy shacks or wretched slovenly cottages, for the land edging on any mining property is taken up by poor people and made unbeautiful by them in their pitiful efforts to live.

The road moves on with its cranking, rolling trams past dumps and dams and distant headgear. It crosses the boundary of the Robinson Deep Estate, and proceeds unruffled and undeterred through the heart of the property. Presently it stops at the landing-stage to permit a load of workmen, office-boys, and people of less obvious calling to alight. It is half-past eight in the morning, and the sun is monotonously bright. The offices of Robinson Deep are enclosed in a low red-brick building bounding the road, but their quiet and regulated efficiency is broken by the background of sound, no less efficient, no less regulated, but somehow less conventional and proper.

You have a few minutes to spare; as usual, you are irritatingly early for your appointment. You find, when you investigate the back of the offices, that the noise is a complete roar made up of many lesser screeches and grinds. Natives are pushing those small iron trucks which have now become associated in your mind with

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

mining. They are loaded with muddy rock, and by a system involving the pulling and hitching of various lengths of wire—much like a small boy's inventive use of Meccano and string—they are made to run along miniature railway lines which disappear through a subway under the road onto the other half of the property. Close by more natives are sharpening iron drills, shouting to one another as they work, and breaking out into wild shaking rounds of laughter which fly above the sparks of their tools in a firework display of sound. Behind them a headgear looms largely, and all about are great circular tanks of cyanide into which mammoth pipes steadily drip more poison.

You are one minute late, now, for your appointment, and this permits you to keep it. You return to the offices, and after walking into the stores department, the general office, the staff room, and the pensions department, you eventually find your way to the manager's secretary. She is a tall, fair, well-paid typist who is rather bored about you until she discovers that you have *not* come in search of a job. Your name? Ah, yes, the manager is expecting you. He will see you now.

The manager of Robinson Deep is a vast figure of a man, with a deep booming voice, startling eyebrows, and a laugh and a hand-grip that make you like him instantly. He talks to you about his mine, leaning back in his chair every few minutes to pull a chart down from the wall like pulling down a blind. The map is a maze of brightly colored triangles, squares and rhomboids. The yellow is high-grade ore, the blue is low-grade ore, the green is faulty rock or dyke. . . . The manager explains the construction of his mine carefully, and makes a memorandum of any question you ask which needs statistical and accurate answering.

Yes, Robinson Deep is the deepest mine in the world. Operations are now in progress at a depth of eighty-five hundred feet from the surface—that is, twenty-five hundred feet below sea level. You are to be taken down Chris shaft. Perhaps you would rather not waste any more time? The manager offers to drive you over to the shaft-head in his car. It is too far to walk. Over the road, past the dumps, hooting behind ox-wagons, spurting over the

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

railway line before the booms can be lowered against you, overtaking trams, past more dumps, and then the car turns to the left and enters the iron gates of the Chris section of the mine.

The manager pulls up in a rectangle of corrugated-iron buildings. A handsome, well-built young man in khaki trousers and a heavy shirt comes toward you. He, too, is expecting you. He is the underground manager of Chris shaft. There are introductions and handshakes. The underground manager has a double-barreled name and an infectious smile. There is a sly bout of chaffing from the manager and there is laughter about it, for he has remembered what you had almost forgotten—that you are a woman, and a young woman, to boot.

It is not often, he says, that young women are specially privileged guests of the mines. Unfortunately—he almost winks as he sighs—it is not often.

And never before has a woman been permitted to go down to the fifty-ninth or last level of the mine. You, it is explained, will be the first woman to stand at the bottom of the world's deepest gold mine. You are suitably impressed. Rather stupidly you bet the mine manager ten bob that you won't come up alive. It was stupid, because either way you must stand to lose your ten bob. You realize this long after.

The deep booming voice takes leave of you cheerfully, and you are handed over to the young underground manager, who is to escort you in your expedition down the mine.

First, though, you must discard that light green frock and that jaunty, unstable hat. You are taken to a changing-room, where you are given trousers, tied up round the waist with a length of bandage, a shirt, a heavy khaki trench coat and the inevitable sou'-wester, in which apparel you successfully disguise yourself. Then to the shaft-head, with its gaping black holes slipping into the earth, and its flying, jumping, disappearing skips.

The journey to the bottom of Robinson Deep is accomplished in three stages. Visitors are taken down two of the three shafts. They are never allowed down the third stage, because the heat and ventilation at this part of the mine make conditions almost intol-

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

erable for any other than the experienced miner, and the authorities are naturally averse to taking their guests into the dangers of fainting fits, heat-stroke or heart-failure.

The first stage down the mine is a vertical drop from the surface to a depth of forty-two hundred and fifty-four feet.

This journey must be the most uncomfortable one in modern civilization.

The iron cage which has been brought up to the surface for you by some unseen operator in a distant control-room is an ordinary metal box hanging on the end of a steel rope. Its dimensions are considerably smaller than those of the shaft in which it is suspended, and as you step into its enclosed darkness it sways gently under your feet, and seems to withdraw all the support of its iron walls in a mock elasticity. The underground manager, who has come in after you, securely fastens the gate, and when he has shouted an unintelligible order to the outside world, the cage begins to move. There is no hesitancy, no gentle introduction to the fury of this pent-up speed. Without warning, the cage drops down into the earth at the rate of two thousand feet a minute.

It is a devil chariot, a demon ride. It is quite dark, and the box is stuffed with the blackness of crowding, covering miles of dark earth, a blackness unbroken by any light, unsuspected in its intensity, throttling in its thickness. The underground manager is standing next to you. You cannot see him. You cannot even dimly discern his outline. You are boxed in now not by four iron walls, but by a casement of darkness which fits itself about you as tightly as a cotton glove on a hot day.

The cage in its headlong flight is thrown from one side of the shaft to the other, rebounding, jumping, twisting, falling like a ball being hit by an expert squash-player. The noise is deafening. It is like a thousand pieces of jagged iron being rained on to a metal roof; it is like two battleships in collision; it is like the fall of Eiffel Tower; it is like the breaking up of all things solid; it is like hell.

The cage is thrown from side to side, and the unwinding steel rope which holds it thinly gives further impetus by its springiness to the bounding, banging box. The floor is seldom under your

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

feet; the walls are first pressing against you, then receding sharply, to leave nothing but a black space of darkness. The minutes pass in clanking iron chains like centuries. It is a hundred years of torture, of agony, and you have dropped only two thousand feet. One minute. Farther and farther into the earth. The cage crashes on into the black hole below. It screams as it falls. It is more vicious, more fiendish in its impingement on the frame of the shaft. All the rocks of the ages are falling in on the iron box. The noise is unearthly. The steel rope is still unwinding. Another century. Four thousand feet. Two minutes. This can never stop. This at last is to comprehend the bottomless well. This is falling through space; falling through black night. There can be no end. . . .

The cage stops.

The silence is piercing; the stillness is painful.

You step out on to the landing level, forty-two hundred and fifty-four feet below the surface. There is electric light here, and you see the tunnels or drives spreading out from the shaft-head like the strands in a spider's net. The underground manager, smiling, unscathed, reassuring, leads you along a tunnel as wide and as busy as a tube railway platform. At four thousand feet life is still easy and luxurious. The floor of the tunnel is cemented underfoot. Its rocky walls are cleanly whitewashed. The tracks laid along the tunnel are alive with truckloads of rock, which are being pushed by sweating half-stripped natives. It is warm.

The cemented floors are no mere fanciful frills, or incidental arrangements for a royal visit. They were laid down with a more serious purpose: they were installed for the prevention, as far as possible, of silicosis, more usually known as phthisis. The incidence of this disease along the Reef forms one of the major problems of mining. Every possible step is taken to combat its occurrence, and in the phthisis fight the mines spend their money generously. It is essential, as a preventive measure, to keep down the fine powdered rock which flies out in great dense clouds whenever drilling operations are being conducted or wherever the broken ore is being handled. To this end cement is laid down wherever it is

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

possible, and water is used liberally in every nook and corner of the mine. Yet the mining companies pay out one million, two hundred thousand pounds a year in pensions, benefits and relief schemes to phthisis sufferers and their dependents.

You wonder a little uneasily, as you stroll comfortably along the mine drive on the forty-ninth level, whether the fine strong bodies you see all around will be torn and tortured one day by this deadly disease. It takes fifteen years to set in, and fifteen years to prove fatal; it is slow but sure, and hundreds of strong men have been mowed down by phthisis.

In the early days, you recall, they used to die like plague-stricken people. They are dying in the hundreds now, every year, from an infection contracted thirty, forty, fifty years ago. About four hundred white men pay the penalty of phthisis every twelve months. The number of black men who die is incalculable, for the native goes back to the hills and to his home in the veldt to die.

But the President of the Chamber of Mines has reported that no miner who has entered the industry since 1923 has yet contracted silicosis. It is early yet, of course. The time limit has not expired, but it is an encouraging report—

You have walked a long way by this time, past worked-out stopes, through gates, over little canals of running water, past gigantic ventilating plants, along the rocky jagged tunnel which stretches out interminably before you. It is a long way. You mention the fact to the underground manager. He replies that the workings of any mine are far more extensive than you imagine. It would take, for example, many months to make a systematic or thorough underground tour of the Robinson Deep. There are, in this one mine alone, more than one hundred and fifty miles of tunneling, running horizontally to the surface alone, apart from the many miles that dip vertically and parallel to a depth of eighty-five hundred feet.

You march on.

There is no actual blasting or drilling to be seen in this drive, for it was specially constructed as a main thoroughfare and com-

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

municating channel for the different parts of the mine. It acts as a link between the first shaft which you have unforgettably descended and the second shaft for which you are heading. All the broken rock which has been blasted from the lower levels of the mine is brought up in skips and pushed in truckloads along the great drive toward the third or last shaft on the upward journey to the crushing-house. When at last you reach the second shaft, you are scarcely as eager and fascinated as you were. But, surprisingly enough, the cage which carries you down the second stage is far less nerve-racking than you had expected. It drops down into the blackness comparatively calmly. You must be growing used to discomfort. Your escort, however, is firmly, though charmingly logical, and tells you that this shaft is a good one.

As the cage swings down rapidly, you become conscious of the distance that separates you from the surface. Every now and again, as the cage drops past one level and then the next, the darkness is broken by quick brief flashes of light, like lightning on a moonless night.

Five thousand feet down—fifty-five hundred—six thousand feet.

The cage stops.

You step out into the mud and slush of another landing-level. It is very hot. You take off your trench coat at once. The air is moist and clammy. There is water everywhere. It makes the ground under your feet puddled and slimy. It drips from the rocky walls of the level. It clings obstinately to your forehead in beads of perspiration. They are mining down here extensively, and the method used is wet-mining. Water is introduced through a jet in the jackhammer as it bores its way into the rock; it is sprayed onto the foot-walls and hangings of the stopes and drives; it is flushed over the truckloads of broken rock; it is everywhere. The air is saturated and heavy with moisture. It will not take up the heat from the workers' bodies; it will not absorb the perspiration. Such extreme humidity retards the energy of the men underground and lowers their normal resistance to disease and danger.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

The heat is oppressive.

The blood surges violently up to the surface of your skin to be cooled; but the perspiration still hangs about you, and the hot stifling air presses suffocatingly; there is no relief. The little veins in your temples begin to swell and beat like warning tom-toms.

The miners are listless and heavy-limbed with the heat. They move about their work with a dogged determination, but there is no enthusiasm. It is too hot to bother. It is too hot to be specially alert and watchful, ready for any one of the dozen dangers that lie underground. They move about their jobs lifelessly, their senses dulled, their spirits hot and clammy. A risk which they would never have taken at two thousand feet seems unimportant now; besides, it is the easiest way out. Their bodies are soaked with perspiration. It drips away from them in little streams and rivulets. It cascades from their foreheads and falls from their hands. Their shirts cling in wet ridges to their shoulders. Their heavy khaki trousers are stained brown with the water.

Every day these men lose eight and a half pounds in weight; sometimes nine pounds. It falls away from them in perspiration as they work their eight-hour shift underground. Then at night, back in the cool clear air of normal life, they automatically regain their lost weight. Next day in the heat of the earth it drips away again.

Many men have toiled in greater heat than that which swirls about the bottom of Robinson Deep; but few men have worked in such a saturated hot atmosphere. The humidity figure here is a moisture content of one hundred per cent. It claws at their spirits, it eats into their vitals, it threatens their bodies.

Cuts and scratches fester as plants bloom in a hot-house, and then become septic. White men get boils and carbuncles. Black men who work the hardest get heat-stroke. The authorities try to break the new recruits in gently to the grueling conditions which they must face. At first they are given probationary periods, during which they are put to light work under hot and humid conditions before passing to the hellish business of deep-level mining. At one time at the City Deep Mine all new natives

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

were passed through a specially constructed hot chamber before being allowed underground. The chamber was heated by steam pipes to a temperature of ninety-six degrees, and the test consisted of shoveling rock in this inferno for a total period of sixty minutes. Those who survived the ordeal were allowed to continue with it in the mine.

As you set off along the slushy, crag-enclosed tunnels, you see their black bodies gleaming as they push and tug, pull and carry, haul and hammer the heavy gray rock. Their arms and legs are strong and muscular; as they work they look like figures carved by an admiring sculptor in sweating bronze.

You slip and squelch in the slime underfoot. There is no light now save that uncertain flicker of the carbide lamp you hold. On and on run the tunnels through the earth, threading their tortuous way through rocks which had lain untouched for thousands of years before the detonator and the dynamite came to shatter them. On and on they run, searching out the spotted reef which spells gold. And when it is found, it is found only to be destroyed, to be blasted out and carried away, leaving an empty jagged slit, which has, ironically enough, to be banked up now with the support of stones and timber. Like a stuffed animal, the life is gone, but the form is made to remain.

Your feet are heavy and wearisome as you drag them along through this rocky tube of heat and wet. Your eyes are dimmed and swimming with splashing perspiration. Your hair hangs horribly in sticky wet cords. The curving sides of the tunnel are sharp points of granite, glistening with dripping water like a saliva-ed mouthful of shark's teeth. The brittle rock is ground to an edge which cuts easily through the skin and flesh of uncared bodies.

On the left, now, you come to a break in the surface of the tunnel. It is a gaping hole slanting down away from you, away into the blackness. It is a stope. There are men working down there. You hear the piercing hiss of the jackhammer as it gnaws its way in a neat round hole into the rock. Those holes will be plugged with gelignite, and at four o'clock this afternoon a native boy will

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

run the hurdle with a burning taper, with which he will light the fuses. He will move quickly. There is no time to dawdle when blasting-powder has been lighted. As he runs from one fuse to another with his burning taper, the "lighting-up boy" will shout a warning to all those who may be near. When the last plug has been set alight, and when, a second after, the torch-bearer has regained the safety of some sheltered place, the thunderclap of a hundred explosions will break in the heart of the mine. The walls which were this morning so obstinately solid will shiver and dance. The rock will come crashing down in an awful avalanche, filling the stopes and drives with flying stones and hurtling boulders. The granite earth will be a shaking, falling place of destruction and disintegration. Then it will be quiet. All the spewed-up rock will be left in its choking untidiness for the next shift to cart away to the surface, where it will be crushed into gold.

You see the men now at the bottom of the stope drilling the powder-holes. The outlines of their bodies are gloomy, shivering silhouettes in a haze of yellow dust. The jackhammer screeches its way through the Reef, spitting back clouds of ground and powdered granite. The men at work clutch tight their vicious, kicking instrument. It makes their strong bodies tremble and shiver with its force. But they are fortunate, for at least they can stand up to their job. The reef which they are prizing open is wide enough here to take a man's standing body. He can work upright in the hole he has made. It is a comfort denied to many another worker on the Rand.

At Sub-Nigel, on the extreme east of the Rand, a miner has to be a working Houdini. The Reef here is extremely rich—the richest on the fields—but it is also extremely narrow. The ore, carrying a high content of gold, occurs in shoots in the rock. This unusual formation very nearly spelled the doom of a mine which is today the most prosperous in the world, for when Sub-Nigel first began operations, the geology of the property was regarded as unpayable.

The engineers who were calculating on a continuous sheet of Reef were distracted to find that they constantly lost the gold-

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

bearing rock and were working in barren ground. Their costs were high, their losses heavy. The ground in which they were mining was barren, save for occasional pockets of gold. They had spent nearly two million pounds to open up the property, and an occasional trace of gold could not pay for the firm's stationery.

It was at last mournfully concluded that the Reef did not cross the Sub-Nigel property. It was decided to close the mine down. Somebody suggested that they should make one last attempt. After all, it was a pity to lose two million pounds. New men set to work to wrestle with the problem of Sub-Nigel. Those traces of gold were followed carefully, and the peculiar formation of the Reef at this point was discovered. Sub-Nigel today makes a profit of well over two million pounds every year.

But the men who work in this mine are sorry that its formation is so unusual. You may see them perhaps preparing to enter a stope. It is so narrow that you cannot believe a leg will go in, let alone a whole man. The miner sitting on the edge of a slit seems to be working out some problem. He is trying to decide before he goes in whether he wants to work on his stomach or his back. Once he has wedged himself into the fissure, he cannot turn round. He cannot move. He cannot sneeze. If he is lucky, he will have some eleven or fifteen inches in which to work. He must drill the hard rock with a jackhammer. There is no place in which to sit or even crouch. He must operate the instrument with his feet. What he is trying to decide now is which is the best position in which to spend the day. It is a problem of vast importance to him.

But here, in Robinson Deep, where the Reef is wider, the miners are more like men than snakes. They move about the bottom of the stope quite freely. They stand up. Sometimes they even stretch.

The dust flying out from under the red-hot drill of the jackhammer hurts your eyes and makes your throat dry. You move on, along the steaming, sweltering tunnel, following your own grotesque evil shadow. The step you have just left behind as a

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

muddy imprint in the slime is already covered up and shrouded in a hot darkness.

There are bits of iron piping, old rusty buckets, and lengths of wet timber lying along the side of the tunnel. The carbide in your lamps smells like rotten eggs.

The blood in your body seems to be fighting fiercely for air. Your hands are wet. The trousers which were so neat and dashing a little while ago cling stickily to your legs. The perspiration which slides down your back tickles you, but you don't laugh.

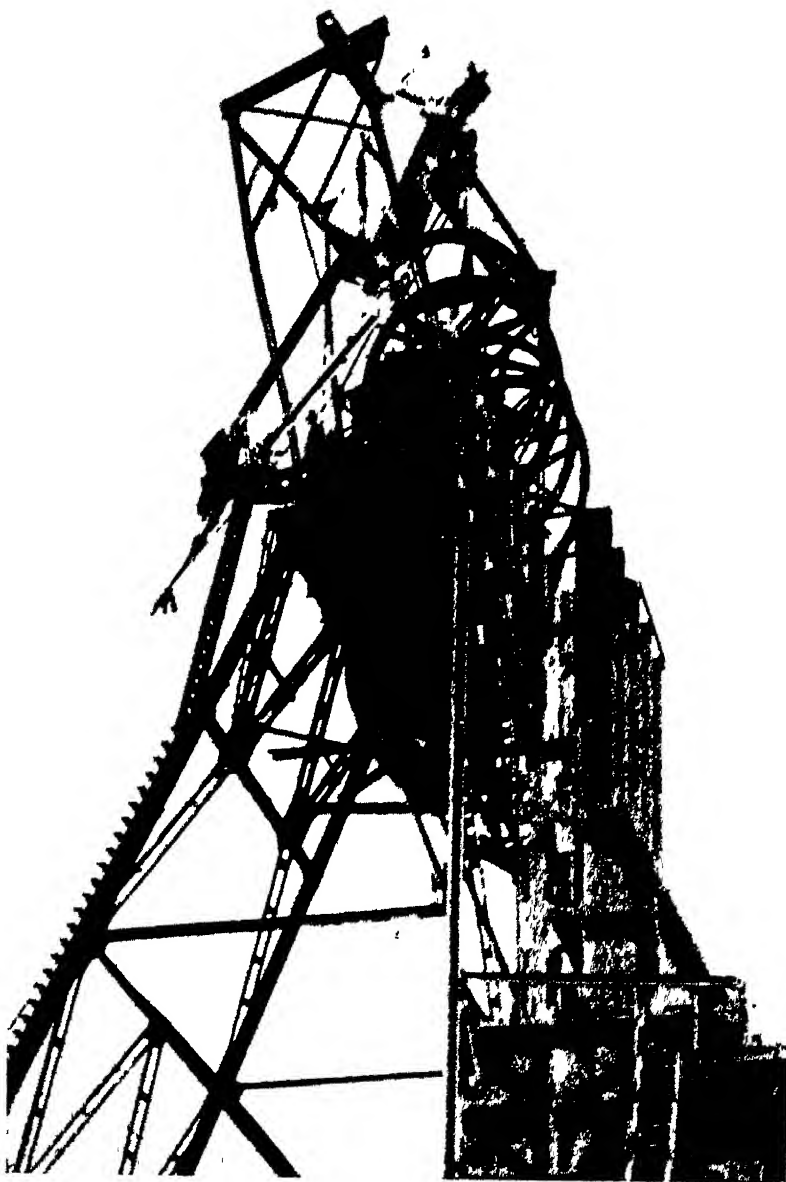
On and on you go.

The narrowness of the drive is broadening out now. It swells into a great, towering, empty hall of rock. This chamber might be a ballroom constructed for some huge Spirit of the Earth. The sharp, uneven walls rise above you to a height of about thirty feet. The room is seventy-five feet long and fifty feet wide. It has been carved out of the world. It is austere, unreal, overbearing. There are some workmen clinging perilously to ladders high up in the craggy heights. It is they who have fashioned this great hall out of the rock with their instruments. They look stupidly inconsequent against the grim, gray walls. Pitifully impotent they appear against the weight of rock they have been teasing. They are ants at the bottom of an empty jar. They are men caught in a cavern six thousand feet in the earth.

This chamber is going to be a new machinery room. Batteries and dynamos and great mammoth winding-drums will be laboriously carried down from the surface and planted here, so that men may proceed still lower into the earth. At present the last stage in the journey is covered by small two-ton skips. They must have bigger cages to travel to the bottom of the mine. The men hammer away at the walls. The sound drops to the floor like a goblet falling in a banqueting-hall.

You walk on.

Round the next corner there is waiting a two-ton skip. It is to carry you to the fifty-ninth level. The skip is an open iron tray, used normally for the hoisting of rock. It leans flatly against the side of the shaft at a dipping angle, for this is an inclined shaft



A runaway skip taken shortly after it had raced up through the earth and crashed through the iron framework of the headgear, killing many people.



## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

sloping down to the bottom at an angle of thirty-three degrees. The iron tray is coated with yellow mud; at the far end it is covered in, like the toe of a shoe. You clamber in awkwardly and slither down. It is like a crude caricature of a toboggan. The shaft yawns away in front of you. The steel rope which holds the skip quivers close behind you. You feel yourself moving now. You are sliding away from that friendly voice which gave the order to go.

Faster. Faster.

The skip flies down the incline breathlessly. As it approaches and passes each level on the way, the comfortable feeling of humanity is left behind. Water dripping from the timbered frame of the shaft flies stinging into the open skip. The solitary little carbide flame in your lamp goes out.

Faster. Faster.

You are crashing down madly into a black unknown. Suppose the rope broke now. Suppose a rock or timber pole had fallen across the shaft down there—ahead of you.

Faster. Faster.

Suppose the skip was out of control. . . .

You can see nothing. Your ears are blocked up. You are choking with the surfeit of hot black air pressed back against you. How far have you come? How much farther must you go? Is there no way to stop this hurtling tray? Suppose the rope broke now.

It is never going to stop.

It can't stop.

It is out of control.

How much longer.

Fifty-fourth level.

Fifty-fifth level.

Fifty-sixth, fifty-seventh, fifty-eight . . .

The skip slows down sickeningly.

Fifty-ninth level.

You climb out and stand for a moment among the timber and loose iron rails at the bottom of the mine.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

You are eighty-five hundred feet from the surface.

The heat is terrific. It clutches at you in a hungry, vicious way. Ha! a new victim. You don't care. There is an oppressive melancholy down here. You don't care about that either. You don't care about anything. You want to vomit.

The temperature of the rock at the fifty-ninth level of Robinson Deep is about one hundred and four degrees. The temperature of the air is ninety-three degrees. The humidity is one hundred. These three factors constitute the greatest problem in deep-level mining today. They present an obstacle which has not yet been overcome. They threaten the future of mining, for unless some method of counteracting the temperature and humidity is found, mining development cannot proceed much below eighty-five hundred feet on the Rand.

The more optimistic experts believe that machinery which has not yet been designed will make it possible in the future to mine at ten thousand feet, and it has been estimated that this extra fifteen hundred feet would give an added revenue of two hundred and eighty million pounds to the Rand. But the increased depth remains a theory and a hope, and the reality stops short at eighty-five hundred feet.

There is no lack of gold down here. The Reef is found to be just as rich and consistent as it was nearer the surface, and there is every indication that it goes on dipping into the earth far below the fifty-ninth level. It is sloping away from the tools of man into a marsh of heat and wet where no one can follow. It may continue indefinitely slanting away into the earth. But there is no one to fetch it out. There is no man who can fight against these extreme conditions. The soaking atmosphere and the heat will bring not gold, but heart attacks and collapse.

All the brains on the Rand—and these are many today—are striving to overcome this barrier of nature. One mine thought of sending ice down their shafts, until it was found by experiment that if every skip and cage carried nothing but tons of ice into the workings all day long, the effect on heat conditions would be almost negligible.

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

Unless, then, some machinery can be devised to solve this, the greatest mining problem on the Rand today, development cannot go on. Progress must be thwarted. The rich reef of gold will have to be abandoned. It must be left in the ground where it was first found.

The Robinson Deep Company have just installed an air-conditioning plant, the effects of which are being eagerly awaited by the entire mining world. This machine, which cost more than one hundred thousand pounds to install, should prove whether or not it is possible to work lower than eight thousand or nine thousand feet. It is designed to reduce the entire volume of air entering one shaft—that is, five hundred thousand cubic feet of air a minute—to a condition slightly above freezing. It will pour cold dry air into the mine day and night throughout the year, absorbing heat and moisture as it courses through the workings. The claims or ambitions of this plant are not spectacular. It is hoped that the system will set back the most active workings in Robinson Deep (which are in the region of seventy-five hundred feet) to the temperature conditions prevailing at six thousand feet. In other words, the mine in respect of temperatures should be made relatively fifteen hundred feet shallower. As every thousand feet in depth represents five years of life to a mine, this mechanical “shortening” will, it is hoped, add seven and a half years to the life of the mine.

With the new machinery on Robinson Deep the air is drawn through an air-conditioning chamber, where, in contact with dense sprays of cold brine, it is reduced in temperature to thirty-five degrees. The reduction in temperature causes the condensation of excess humidity, and it is estimated that on an extreme summer day during the rainy season the extraction of moisture from the air will amount to some twelve hundred gallons an hour.

Had not the abandonment of the gold standard proved so profitable to gold mining in South Africa, development schemes such as this would never have been economically possible. As it is, mining houses on the Rand are taking full advantage of their profits to reorganize and improve their properties and to

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

chase the fleeting gold reef with all the forces of big capital. The chase will continue, and the hare of heat will be hunted by the hounds of ingenuity and money until the cost of the sport makes the victory no longer worth it—until expenditure exceeds revenue, or until the hounds make their kill.

All about you, as you stand down here at the deepest point of the world's deepest mine, is this sense of struggle. At the moment it is uneven. The heat is winning. There is an appearance of dispirited attempt.

Loose stones and rubble lie uselessly at your feet in the inevitable slush. Two men stand looking at the rock as though they had never seen it before. There seems nobody else about. It is very quiet. A single narrow tunnel runs wretchedly away. Some timber is propped up lazily against a jagged wall. The usual activity is missing. It is too hot. They have blasted their way down here a mile and a half below the ground. Now they stand with drooping shoulders, wondering, perhaps; perhaps not thinking at all. It is too hot. You move forward like an automaton. You haul your unwilling body through the dank unfinished drive.

The blood pounds against your temples. The perspiration, which had, at first, dripped from your forehead slowly, almost rhythmically, now begins to splash away hurriedly. It is difficult to breathe. The hot wet air beats about your throat in a menacing, surly way. Your voice, which left you timidly enough, develops into a hollow roar as it swells round the jagged tunnel. The light from your carbide lamp throws grotesque, dancing figures onto the rock around, but it is soon drowned in the thick darkness a few feet away. Water drips from the craggy arch over your head, leaving a glistening surface of stone and slate. Underfoot the ground is slushy and slippery. The perspiration courses down your body in streams.

You feel trapped down here, and slowly your mind begins to appreciate the horror of entombment. In front of you stretches a long narrow tunnel which has been blasted out of the rock. It winds its way through the earth for some distance, and then

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

stops. The only way to escape is to retrace your steps through the slush and mud, squeezing your way past boulders and along sharp, razor-like walls. On and on through the dark, struggling to make your legs obey your tired will; on and on, while your overheated brain imagines a fall of rock just ahead, imagines the crack, the roar of falling stone, the dust flying, the darkness thicker and more solid than any darkness you have ever known.

There was a crack sounding like the report of a near-by pistol. Then a heavy, tearing, grinding roar. The earth shook violently. The stolid rock of drive and tunnel, of stope and winze, trembled the full length of their crawling, winding way. The slimy ground underfoot moved about smoothly and uncontrollably like a sliding glacier. The hanging rock of ceiling quivered and danced, urging the sidewalls into the same uneven, hysterical motion. The rumble of earthquake muttered and moaned its way through dark underground caverns.

Every light in the mine went out.

A fall of rock.

From the sound and the motion, it was a heavy fall. On the fifty-first level. Six thousand feet below the surface. The men in the mine dropped their tools and stood waiting. All around them the earth heaved restlessly, and they, not moving, were moved in this tilting, shivering, underground world like men standing motionless on a mechanical jumping floor.

It was pitch dark.

They waited.

Above them, between them and liberty, were six thousand feet of holed and burrowed rock, dancing uncertainly. Below them more than two thousand feet of earth shivered and shook away into the heart of the mine. They waited. They waited either for obliteration or stillness. They moved no more than the earth itself moved. The tons of granite above them, so strong, so heavy, so unresisting, could fall now as willingly as hail—as destructively as hail raining into an orchard of peach blossom. They waited for the first sting of an approaching doom, for the first flying

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

rock to dislodge itself from that heaving canopy of granite, to fall unnoticed at their feet, while all the tons surrounding them came crashing down in a deluge of disaster.

They waited quietly in the black heart of the mine for the second fall of rock.

The shaking, stuttering earth grew calmer. The gibbering rock grew quieter. The rumble and roar of disintegration faded out into a malevolent mutter. The hoped-for stillness came. There was no second fall. Then the men who had waited rigidly for the promise of death to be kept or broken moved quickly in the quiet tunnels. There had been a heavy fall somewhere on the forty-first level. They must find out where it was. They must discover if anyone had been trapped by the bursting rock. The dark drives were alive now with hurrying movement. Lamps hastily lighted punctured the blackness with little points of yellow light. Voices echoed strangely as the rapid shouts of inquiry reverberated through the dust-filled passages.

Men but newly released from the threat of entombment hurried forward anxiously to find the place where disaster had struck. As they moved along the drives, they were led in their quest by the clues of destruction which now lay scattered round about. The iron cocopan rails had been buckled up here into a pitiful switchback. The heavy timber props supporting the sides of the drives had been crushed and flung aside by the ruthless power of the rock. Stone packs had been tossed about onto the footwalls or floors. Great boulders dislodged from the solidity of the sides lay sharply across the way, marking the route to the rockfall like skeletons leading to a cave.

And there, at the far end of the drive, where an hour ago, ten minutes ago, men had been working down the slanting sides of a stoep, there was nothing but a great mountain of rock.

A great mountain of rock which plugged the tunnel from hanging to footwall like a cork. A great quivering mountain of rock high as the tunnel itself, broad as its sides, which hid by its hugeness the vast gaping places from which it had come. A great mountain of rock, which in its own excess, had spilled into the

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

mouth of the stope, choking it up, surrounding it, smothering it, defacing, obliterating.

There were sixteen men trapped in the stope, pinioned behind that tonnage, caught by the crash of the falling mountain, entombed. Sixteen men. Native men. An hour ago they were underlings, black servants, units in a big machine. Now, in this time of horror and distress, they were comrades, unlucky fellow workers trapped in their jobs, needing the assistance and the help of their white masters.

Already on the surface, where the rock-burst had shaken the foundations of the mine offices like a sharp earthquake—already rescue teams were being hurriedly assembled. There was no lack of volunteers. Never in the history of Rand mining have men hesitated to offer themselves as helpers in a cause which even now is fraught with danger. Disaster in a mine makes brave men of its workers. They were streaming down the shafts now in cages and skips to the fifty-first level. They carried hammers and chisels and crowbars. They hurried in silence along the gloomy drives.

The air was thick with the falling dust of the rock-burst. All the mine was quiet and still, save in that one place where the great mountain of rock had hurled itself outward. Here, on the threshold of this newly made tomb, the danger was yet alive and real.

The mine was talking.

The rocks crowding up gradually to the piled barrier were still quivering; the dust was flying out in great yellow clouds. The granite hanging over the awful disorder was hummocked and hillocky, showing deep black valleys where boulders had fallen away, and dark fissures which spoke of past force and future power. All the time now the rock hanging round the fallen mass cracked and spat and mumbled. It talked of the glory of destruction and of the ecstasy of revolt. It talked in threats, promising more mutilation and another holocaust. It quivered and shook warningly. It cracked over the rescuer's head as sharp evidence of danger. It waited for one false footstep, one arm brushing care-

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

lessly against a jutting crag, one shoulder bumping accidentally against those flimsily balanced boulders. It talked of another rockfall. An imminent one.

The great mountain of rock blocking up the stope stretched forward along the drive to meet the rescue team. They marched on in single file, picking their way delicately through the disordered tunnel, not daring to talk, hardly daring to breathe, lest the vibration should bring the whole mass of rock crashing down on them. As they drew nearer the fallen mountain, they stopped. The walls quivered all around, like a bloodhound scenting its victim. It was foolhardy to go on. They could never reach the stope through this huge mountain of restive rock. Foolhardy and criminal, for if they themselves were trapped here by a further fall, their entombment would not only destroy the chance of saving those other sixteen men, but would also involve another rescue team in more danger.

They turned back slowly and retraced their steps along the drive. But they did not return to the surface. They went still farther down the mine to the fifty-second level. When they reached a spot approximately underneath the buried stope, they halted, stripped themselves to the waist, and began to pick away at the solid rock above them in an attempt to hole through to the entombed men. They did not dare use blasting powder, for such an explosion would shatter the trapped bodies lying above, and would bring the trembling rock down in an avalanche of granite.

They had to chip their way through, using their bodies and their hands and sharp-pointed lengths of iron. The men of the rescue team worked in relays. First one man would pick away at the solid face of the rock until he was exhausted. Then he would fall back to the end of the line while the next man would take up his place. It was necessary to economize in space. The tunnel they were making must be as narrow as possible to save energy and time. They must hurry, hurry, upward to the sixteen trapped natives. The sound of chipping and hammering was broken only for a moment when new men moved forward. The narrow hand-made tunnel began slowly to stretch upward

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

through the hard rock. It was only eighteen inches in width.

Ten feet long.

Twenty feet long. Fifty, seventy, a hundred.

The hours moved by. A day passed into night and was born again in dawn.

The chipping and hammering continued.

Exhausted men wormed their way back through the tunnel to sit white and shaking on the side of the drive while their comrades carried on. A hundred feet. A hundred and twenty, a hundred and fifty feet upward, upward, stretching thinly upward to the entombed men.

They must hurry, hurry, hurry.

Thirty-six hours. Forty-five hours. Fifty-five hours. Sixty hours. Hurry, hurry, hurry.

There were lives to be saved, even now, perhaps. Time was life.

The tunnel moved up. Two hundred feet.

The heat was unendurable. Six thousand feet below the surface, and there was no ventilation in that hastily hacked tunnel. The rescuers hammered and chiseled. They could not stand it long now in this tight, hot tube. Half an hour, perhaps. Then they dropped out into the drive, sick and shaking, to collapse a minute after and be dragged away to recover. New men struggled forward. Hurry, they must hurry. Seventy hours. Another day almost. Could there be any life left in that tomb above? Two hundred and forty feet. And then the hard rock ended, and the sound that the crowbar made became hollow.

The rescue team had holed its way into the mass of boulders that lay on the bottom of the stope. The boulders must be moved or circumvented somehow, before the entombed men could be reached. The stench of decomposing flesh was nauseating now. The torn and decaying bodies lying in the stope sent up a screen of overpowering fumes. The rescuers tied blocks of camphor under their noses, and sprayed verbena oil around them as they moved forward. They vomited and retched violently with the stench.

Hurry.



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

Seventy-two hours. . . .

They saved seven of the natives. When the rescue team found them they showed the courage that has now come to be associated with natives. They were lying flat on their backs, pinned down by the fallen rock, unable to move hand or foot, unable to turn their heads, able only to move their eyes. They had lain like this for seventy-two hours while the bodies of their comrades rotted away in the throttled, unventilated hole.

It was part of the game of mining. One of the natives who was taken out of the stope alive but injured reported back for work next morning.

On the fifty-first level of Robinson Deep.

May. 1932.

Rock-bursts occur frequently on the Rand. They bring in their wake a trail of death and injury; they are feared not only by the workers blasting their way through the thickness of the mine, but also by the engineers and scientists sitting in offices on the surface; for even after the most thorough investigations and the most expert deliberation, the source of these bursts or falls can never be exactly anticipated.

The sudden bursting of the rock is caused by the removal of the Reef over large areas, and this throws the weight of the overlying mass of rock onto the unexcavated portions—that is, onto the walls and floors of the levels below. When the depth reaches one thousand feet or more, such supports are unable to bear the huge weight above, and are relentlessly crushed down until the rock bursts out, without warning, at any time or any place.

Sometimes small bursts occur, and then a single piece of stone will fly out from the wall with such terrific force that it will kill any man standing in the line of flight. When a heavy fall occurs, hundreds of tons of rock are dislodged, and the weight of falling granite, with its force of impact, rocks not only the mine itself, but the whole town of Johannesburg for miles around.

There is no question of negligence attaching to a rock-burst. It is something uncontrollable, and, up to now, unavoidable. A fall

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

may occur on any level in any mine. It cannot be foreseen. It cannot be forestalled. Its coming can only be dreaded. The best that mining men can do is to support the rock, and prop it up with timber packs and stone wedges in order to prevent the overlying weight from crushing down too quickly. In every mine these heavy timber or cement packs may be seen squeezed to a pulp by the settling rock; but though they may retard movement, they cannot prevent it altogether, and rock-bursts continue to shake the Rand.

The mining houses, very naturally, greatly dislike and regret the loss of life underground. Every possible precaution is taken in all mines to prevent accidents. Safety-first classes are given, instructive papers are issued, notices of warning and reminders are pasted up all over the workings.

The mining authorities do not view accidents lightly, and an official inquiry is held into the cause of each mishap. If there is any question of negligence or culpability involving death or injury, a legal charge is framed, and the case is heard in the courts of law.

However, despite the most careful efforts made to prevent accidents, statistics for 1934 showed that no less than 610 men were killed and 11,631 injured in the mines—and this was an improved accident rate compared with preceding years.

Such casualties are not confined to any one section of the Rand, nor are they caused by rock-bursts alone. From Sub-Nigel on the east to Randfontein on the west, each and every mine has its death-days. It might be a fall of rock; it might be a skip crash or a run-away cage; it might be fire or flood.

There was fire at Langlaagte. It was an unusual occurrence, for fire in the rocky water-sprayed mines of the Rand is rare. It broke out four thousand feet below the surface, and five of the senior officials of the property, including the manager, went to investigate. It could not be serious. They did not bother to take gas masks. But underground the timber smoldered and flamed in the still limited air, and the fumes were deadly. One by one the officials collapsed. All of them died in the heart of their mine.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

At Sub-Nigel there was a skip crash. It is, alas! not a rare accident. A hoist rope breaks; a cage is over-wound. There are a few more numbers to swell the annual death-rate. On this particular day in Sub-Nigel the skip was traveling to the surface carrying fifteen natives. On reaching the surface landing it failed to stop. It raced on at full speed, high above into the iron framework of the headgear.

So great was the force of the impact that four of the men were flung clear of the headgear, and were hurled thirty feet to the ground. They were killed instantly. The other eleven natives in the skip were tipped over onto a rock bin below, falling head-first in a sprawling mass onto the jagged rock. Four were killed outright. The rest lay groaning until help arrived. One old native had both his legs broken near the thighs, and was badly injured about the face and head.

"Don't worry, baas," he told the kindly official. "My legs are broken, and I have other hurts, but I think my body is all right."

But his body was not all right. This brave old man died later in hospital from shock.

When the hoist-rope broke at Durban Roodepoort Deep, the cage plunged three thousand feet down the shaft onto another cage waiting below. The runaway iron cage scattered in fragments in its headlong flight down the shaft, and burst through the walls of the cage below on to the miners inside. There were thirty men in the bottom cage waiting to be hauled to the surface. They heard a terrific roar, clouds of dust and lengths of timber came sweeping down, and then the plunging cage burst onto them.

After that it was dark. Four of them were killed. Seven were injured.

But the most tragic accident of all happened in 1934 at the East Rand Proprietary Mine. Two natives were entombed by a fall of rock on the thirty-seventh level. A rescue team consisting of five highly placed officials and four miners went immediately to the aid of the buried men. The conditions in the accident area were very dangerous. The rock cracked and split around them

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

as they worked, and muttered darkly of pent-up power. After forty minutes the rescue team succeeded in extricating one body. The other native was dead, too; but mining regulations provide that all bodies must be brought to the surface immediately, and the rescuers pushed on in the rumbling, creaking rock. They had reached a point from where it was possible to see the buried native, when there was a loud sharp report, and a pressure burst blew out the floor and ceiling of the drive, burying the entire rescue party under tons of falling rock. Eleven bodies were later recovered by another band of volunteers.

And at the New Machavie Mine there was the tragedy of flood.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, and they were blasting in a stope which adjoined the old workings of the mine. By accident the blasting holed into an old disused shaft full of water. The mine was flooded and forty-six men were trapped.

James Brotherton was walking up to the tenth level when he heard an unusual noise following blasting. He wondered what it could be, and then almost immediately he knew. Torrents of water came pouring down into the level from above. For one second he stood aghast, and then, pushing his way through the oncoming water, he struggled into the drive, and managed to catch hold of some timber. It gave immediately, and he was washed down.

Following close on his heels was a young boy—a learner named Leslie Roberts—who was on his first shift. Together the two men were washed down the drive in a sea of black, foul-smelling water. Brotherton clutched madly at the walls trying to get a hold, but he was swept onward down the dark tunnel. Both men were now completely under water. At last Brotherton managed to grasp a piece of jutting rock, and young Roberts caught him round the waist as the water swept him on.

There they hung; two men clinging desperately to life at the bottom of a mine.

The water was icy cold, and as it rushed past them it tore the clothing off their backs, leaving their blue shivering bodies naked. Brotherton hung on to the rock until his hands were numb and

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

his arms senseless. Roberts clung round his waist, unable to touch the ground with his feet. For an hour they dangled like this in the swirling water, unable to see each other. And then Roberts spoke.

"I can't stick it any longer," he said.

But Brotherton urged him to try to hold on just a little longer. He spoke to the young learner encouragingly, kindly. It was the poor kid's first day down a mine. He told him that the rescue party would soon be here. He had not much hope, but he tried to sound convincing.

There was silence, and a moment after Brotherton was conscious that he was gone. He had slipped away into the dark water. For a little while he hung on alone, and then, almost exhausted, he struggled forward, feeling for the tram-lines with his hands and dragging himself along them with his body completely submerged. He was certain now that the rescue team could never find him in these black, flooded tunnels.

He must keep alive. It was his only hope. He must keep alive. And he spoke aloud to himself.

"I can't stick it any longer," he said.

Just then he saw a light. It was a member of the rescue gang, waist deep in water, who had come to look for him.

Although Brotherton was completely exhausted, he insisted on going back to look for Roberts. The water had subsided by this time. It was only four feet deep, but it was still moving at the rate of about thirty miles an hour. Together the two men fought against it. They struggled along the northern section of the mine in the hope of finding Roberts. But he was not there. They went still farther down, and then they found Roberts. His body was stuck against the tram rails, and he was dead.

In the meantime rescue parties were searching feverishly for the other forty-four men. For three and a half days they worked in the water-logged earth searching in the gloom of the mine for bodies, but they found no one.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of the fourth day a dramatic message was rushed up the shaft to the anxious people waiting at the surface.

## AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EARTH

"Anderson is alive, and two natives," it said. "We have found them in a box-hole on the flooded fourteenth level, but the imprisoned air has kept the water back. We have not come across any dead bodies so far."

Anderson, on the first sign of danger, had climbed into a box-hole above the fifteenth level, where the water had almost reached the roof. After he had been rescued he told the story of his experience himself.

"I never quite lost control of myself," he said, "although at times I was screaming and praying with the natives. I could hear the thud of the pumps, and I knew that my comrades were working incessantly to get to our relief. It was bitterly cold, especially at night, and it was only by the rise and fall of temperature that I knew night from day.

"I had no matches, and although I could just distinguish the figures on my luminous watch-face, I could not see the hands. By Saturday morning I was beginning to get mixed up as to the time, but I knew it was either Friday or Saturday.

"I was getting very thirsty, and so were the natives, I broke off pieces of a cigarette I had in a tin box and gave some to the native with me, so that we could chew, and thus moisten our mouths. I was afraid to drink from the water beneath us, because I knew that it would be rank poison, having been held up in the old mine workings for over twenty years.

"We just waited and listened, and listened and waited. The native with me was getting weaker and more depressed. He wanted to slip down into the water and take his chance either of getting through or dying. He complained all the time of cold, and I had to keep rubbing him day and night.

"On the last day, when I heard the pumping getting closer and closer, I had every hope that everything would be all right. I knew that they were getting to the fifteenth level, and I kept telling Tandani, the native in my box-hole, and shouting to the native in the adjoining raise that the bosses would soon be there and that they would be safe.

"Tandani was very quiet. He said he wanted to die, but at intervals he shouted and screamed madly.

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

"The rescue sounds drew closer and closer. I told the two natives to keep on shouting so that the rescuers might know in which direction to look for us. Then I seemed to hear the movements of people, and I told the natives to keep quiet so that I could be sure, but they kept on screaming and I could not make myself heard. Eventually I saw the gleam of an approaching light, and by the reflection I saw that the water in the haulage was dropping. I knew now that it would be all right. Sounds were coming from the drive, and the lights came nearer. Then I heard the voices of the rescuers. The native in the next raise shouted, 'Hullo, boss,' and I leaned down and put my arms around the neck of one of them."

At the New Machavie Mine, in bitterly cold and rainy weather, the bodies of thirty-nine men were buried in graves on a little hillside in the shadow of the headgear.

And so it goes on, year after year. Men work and sweat in the earth; they live and die to make gold.

Last year they crushed more than forty million tons of rock on the Witwatersrand. Next year they will crush more. Perhaps somewhere at the bottom of these mines they will find the bones of a human arm or leg left behind when a body was being pulled from under the weight of a fallen mountain of rock.

No matter. Work must go on, for this is the greatest gold-mining industry in the world.

This is the story of gold.

## EPILOGUE

THE GREAT GOLD-BEARING REEF OF THE WITWATERSRAND WAS DISCOVERED fifty years ago, in 1886.

Eleven hundred years before the birth of Christ a nation of men were taking gold out of African ground. They were mining where Rhodesia now stands, and in the Transvaal. They extracted tin and copper in vast quantities from ground which is now built over in neat suburban squares, or is left open for cows and sheep to graze upon.

They took more than seventy-five million pounds' worth of gold out of the African earth.

These people have vanished, leaving no trace of their identity save the age-old ruins of a lost nation—the crumbling stones of majestic fortresses, the decaying foundations of former citadels, the choked-up workings of abandoned mines.

Here they worked in Africa more than three thousand years ago, following skillfully the belts and veins of metal, using their simple instruments and their hands to bring the mineral wealth up out of the earth and to carry it away. Away. Whither away? All round about the rich Reef of the Witwatersrand they toiled for tin and copper and gold; but they did not find the richest vein of all.

They missed the Rand.

Then in the drowning seas of time they disappeared and were lost. They live now only by the mossy stones which once stood high in temples and fortresses; in the broken bowls, the battered ornaments, the fragmentary relics of their past vitality; in the holes and subterranean passages blocked up now with the dust and weeds of centuries. They live only by the shadow of their own skeleton.

They are a lost and vanished nation.

Some say that the land of Southern Africa from which these



## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

people took their gold was the Scriptural land of Ophir, and that the workers were the Sabæo-Arabians who supplied the merchants of Sheba with the precious metal. Hiram, who voyaged from Tyre to fetch King Solomon's gold, was away three years. It is said he sailed to Sofala, on the coast of Africa, where he loaded four hundred twenty talents of gold—that is, four or five million pounds sterling. The slaves brought by Hiram to King Solomon came with the same shipment as the gold and ivory.

“And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.

“And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon. . . .

“And she [the Queen of Sheba] gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

“And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. . . .

“And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

“For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tharshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.”  
So say the Scriptures.

And the story is filled in and continued by investigators, scientists, archæologists and historians. They say that in the course of time the great power of the Sabæo-Arabians waned until, not by conquest, but by natural absorption, the Phœnicians became masters of the Mediterranean and northern seas, of the Indian Ocean, and the colonies that the Sabæo-Arabians had planted. Then the trade and wealth for which the Sabæans had been famous passed into the hands of the Phœnicians, and they,

## EPILOGUE,

now the leading merchants, navigators, miners and metallurgists of that half-forgotten world, occupied the country of Southern Africa.

Here they added to the building of temples and forts which had been constructed earlier by the Sabæans, and they built the great walls of Zimbabwe. They had come to Africa for gold, and they must have protection. So their forts were massive buildings with walls sometimes fifteen feet broad, and they took many years to construct. One generation passed into another generation, and yet another generation, before all these forts were finished.

The gold-seekers of these ancient times were skillful metallurgists, and they picked out rich shoots and patches and pockets with marvelous cleverness. They were slaves working for their imperial masters without hire or reward, and thus it was possible to mine the low-grade ore which today is barely payable. Forced labor gave them their profits in those dim, far-off days, and the slaves toiled and sweated, and at night slept in great pits.

They cracked the hard face of the rock by stoking up great fires against the granite surface, and then, when the rock was white with heat, they threw cold water on it, splitting open the surface amid great clouds of steam. They crushed the rock with stones and washed it in rivers. The gold dust was stored in the district forts protecting the workings, until a sufficient quantity had been accumulated. Then it would be carried to one or other of the capital towns to be smelted, and afterward the fine gold would be sent to the metropolis at Zimbabwe, where it would be kept until some caravan set out for Sofala.

The centuries passed, and Southern Africa was busy with the work of the gold-seekers.

Then one day they disappeared: they vanished completely, leaving nothing but buildings and tools, half-finished jobs and forgotten possessions.

Why did they leave so hurriedly? Why did they abandon their still-rich workings? Why did they disappear so abruptly from the citadels in which they lived for centuries? History is not certain. Some say that they had worked down to water in their

## THE GREAT GOLD REEF

mines, and this prevented further development, as they did not know the hydraulic pump.

Some say that the refractory character of the ore at lower levels made mining with primitive tools impossible. Perhaps the mines were abandoned because the grade of ore was not high enough, and yet there are evidences that the ancients worked very low-grade rock. Perhaps they were ignorant of deep-level mining.

But the most widely held theory of all is that the great hordes of savage cannibal natives rose against these foreign miners, driving them to their metropolis at Zimbabwe, where they made a last desperate stand before being chased from the country.

And so they vanished completely.

But was this disappearance final?

There are natives in Africa today whose features link them closely with the lost nation which once inhabited their country. The Makalanga tribe stands as human testimony to the faded history of the past. In appearance this tribe differs from the ordinary native. The men bear a Semitic cast of feature, with the arched nose of the early Sabæan, and mentally they are more advanced than any other tribe in the Eastern and Central territories of Africa. Their commercial instincts and shrewdness are notable characteristics, and the Matabele man receiving his wages will appeal to a Makalanga to check the amount for him. These and other traits point to the theory that the ancient gold-seekers who lived in Southern Africa throughout many centuries moved among the aborigines and bred from them a race which, although it has forgotten the story of the ancient gold-seekers, bears about its features a silent tale of the shrouded past.

Zimbabwe has given place to Johannesburg.

The dust of one great gold city has given rise to the bricks and mortar of another. The ancient slaves toiling and sweating in the earth in those dark days were the indirect ancestors of the miners crushing and drilling even now under the crust of the Rand. The gold which was once used to glorify the palace of King Solomon is now packed and shipped to the dank vaults of the Bank of England. Johannesburg is no busier, with its crowded





## EPILOGUE

streets and tall buildings, than that thriving, hustling metropolis of a forgotten age.

The Witwatersrand is the greatest goldfield in the world. It has collected a nation of people round its rich reef. It has built towns, and made a golden trail across the world.

But it has all happened before. Perhaps when the Rand is exhausted some future race of explorers will examine with magnifying-glasses and microscopes what is Crown Mines and Robinson Deep today. Perhaps a thousand years from now they will peer eagerly into the faces of some native tribe, searching for a link with the lost nation of the twentieth century.

Perhaps, after all, we are not so clever as we thought, for it has all been done before.

The search for the yellow metal is no new thing.

The search for gold is the very history of the world.

THE END



# INDEX





## INDEX

- Afrikanders, 181  
 Aldgate, 91, 93, 192  
 Ali Baba, 221-222  
 Aliens Expulsion Law, 124  
 Allies, the, 183  
 Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 170  
 America  
     interest in South Africa, 196  
 Amsterdam, 80  
 Anderson, 297  
*Anglian*, 91  
 Anglo-American Company, 196  
 Anglo-Boer War  
     *see* Boer War  
 Aqua Frio, 20  
 Argentine, 128  
 Armenia, 128  
 Ashmead-Bartlett, Sir Ellis, 122  
 Atlantic Ocean, 17  
*Atwick*, the, 17, 20  
 Australia, 20, 23, 33, 53, 129  
 Austria, 82  
  
 Bailey, Abe, 85, 90  
 Baines, Thomas, 32  
 Bank of England, 245, 246, 302  
 Bantu, 182  
 Bapedi tribe, 142  
 Baramapulana, 142  
 Barberton, 36, 37, 40, 42, 48, 51  
 Barnato, Barney, 72, 91-116, 191, 192, 268  
     and Kruger, 100-104  
     character of, 97-98, 100-106  
     early life of, 91-93  
 Barnato Brothers, 92, 95, 101, 106  
     and blackmail, 106-116  
     in London, 92  
 Barnato Buildings, 95, 97, 111, 113, 115  
 Barnato Diamond-Mining Company, 93  
 Basutoland, 58, 59, 61, 67, 147  
 Basuto tribe, 63, 146  
 Bear's Valley, 20  
 Bechuanaland, 33-34, 79  
 Bechuanaland Border Police, 114  
 Beecham, Sir Thomas, 167  
  
 Beer's Consolidated Mines, *de*, 93  
 Beit, Alfred, 85, 94  
*Bells, The*, 97  
 Benoni, 171, 185  
 Bergner, Elizabeth, xiii  
 Bible, the, 17, 21, 131, 299-300  
 Birmingham, 131  
 Blaauwberg, 30  
 Black Brian, 58, 60-64  
 Block B, 197, 198  
 Bloed River, 29  
 Bloemfontain, 130, 132  
 Bloemfontain Conference, 158  
 Blyde River, 138, 139, 140  
 Boers, 30, 32, 35, 52, 53-54, 88, 119, 129,  
     130, 131, 150, 183  
     characteristics of, 20-22, 24-25, 28-29,  
         31, 32, 37, 49, 50, 53-54, 137, 193,  
         197, 230-233  
 Boers versus Britons  
     antagonism today, 270  
 Boer War, 132, 155  
 Bond Street, 178  
 Booysens, 53  
 Botha, General Louis, 135, 199  
 Brakpan, 186  
 Brakpan Mine raid  
     climax of revolution, 187-188, 189-  
         190  
 Brewer, Captain, 17  
 Brickfields, the, 55  
 British Liberals, 160  
 Brodigan, 187  
 Brotherton, James, 295-296  
 Buffelsdorn Mine, 104-105  
 Buhrman, 28-29, 31  
 Bulman, 169, 170  
 Burgers, Thomas, 34  
 Butt and Marcus, Messrs., 202  
  
 California, 17, 20, 33, 53  
     gold regions of, 20  
 Canada, 20, 23  
 Cape Colony, 53, 84, 142, 183, 192  
     discovery of diamonds, 35, 79

# THE GREAT GOLD REEF

- Cape Times*, the, 214-216  
 Capetown, 18, 20, 23, 67, 74, 91, 114,  
     116, 212, 218, 246  
 Capitalism, 181  
 Capone, Al, 167  
 Carnera, 167, 219  
 Central Parliament, 161  
 Central Railway Station, 174  
 Cetewayo, Chief, 150  
 Chamber of Mines, 73, 76, 79, 163, 165,  
     172, 179, 180, 181, 183, 185, 238,  
     241, 246, 253, 254, 269, 276  
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 96, 122, 128, 131, 198  
 Charleton, 53  
 Chartered Company of Rhodesia, 85  
 China, 159-161  
 Christie, 198  
 City Deep Mine, 278-279  
 Clarens, 133  
 Clifford, 106  
 Codex Sinaiticus, 267  
 Cohen, Lou, 92  
 Color Bar, the, 162, 180, 181  
 Colville, 139-140  
 Communism, 181-183, 184  
 "Confidence Reef"  
     gold discovered on, 38-39, 41  
 Cooper, 61, 63  
 Corner House, 175  
 Cornishmen, 150, 219, 220, 221  
 Criminal Investigation Department, 247  
 Crocodile River, 30, 31  
 Crown Mines, 165-168, 218, 303  
 Czech, 85  
  
 Daggafontain Mine, 195, 196, 257  
 Dekker, 59  
 Delagoa Bay, 80, 101, 102, 136  
 Derby, 96  
 Derdepoort, 30  
 Diamond Jubilee, 90  
 Dingaan, Chief, 18, 19, 150  
 Dodd and Webb, Messrs., 125  
*Dorothea*, the, 136-137  
 Double Springs, 20  
 Downing Street, 198  
 Drage, 245  
 Driehoek, 244, 245, 247, 248  
 Duncan, Patrick, 258  
 Durban, 67, 74, 136  
 Durban Roodepoort Deep, 178  
     skip crash, 294  
  
 Dutchmen  
     *see* Boers  
 Dwars River, 29  
  
 Eagle's Nest, 237  
 East Geduld Mine, 257  
*East Lynne*, 69  
 East Rand Proprietary Mine  
     double rock-fall, 294-295  
 Eckstein, 94  
 Edgar versus Forster, case of, 120-121  
 Edinburgh, 77  
 Eight Hours Bill, 171  
 Eloff Street, 243  
 England, 33, 41, 53, 74, 82, 85, 96, 101,  
     105, 125, 128, 192, 198, 245, 252, 253  
     interested in South African problems,  
     122-123, 128-132, 196  
 European War  
     *see* World War  
 Excess Profits Duty, 256, 257, 258, 259  
  
 Fanko, 166  
 Farrar, George, 85, 90  
 Fascism, 162  
 Ferreira, Colonel, 53  
 Fitzpatrick, J. P., 119-120  
 Forster case, 120-121  
 France, 128  
 Franchise Law, 126-127  
 French Revolution, 186  
*Frittercairn*, the, 20  
  
 Geldenhuis Deep, 178  
 Geldenhuis, Dirk, 37  
 General Staff, 184, 185  
 Geneva, 133  
 George, Lloyd  
     *see* Lloyd George, David  
 Germany, 33, 34, 96, 128, 159  
 Germiston, 186  
 Germiston Station, 244, 247, 248  
 Gibson, Hoot, 167  
*God Save the Queen*, 85  
 Goldfields of South Africa, 84  
 Gold Law, the, 102  
 Gold Producers' Committee, 252  
 Goodyear's Bar, 20  
 Government Areas, 195, 257  
*Government Gazette*, the, 66  
 Great Britain  
     *see* England

# INDEX

- Great Gold Reef  
 description of, 222  
 discovery of, 42-43, 299
- Great Trek, the, 17, 18, 19, 41
- Great War  
*see* World War
- Greece, 128
- Greene, Conynghame, 123
- Gregorowski, 121
- Griqualand West, 79, 91
- Hammond, John Hays, 84, 90
- Harrison, George, 40-42, 44, 218
- Hart, Benny, 99
- Hertzog, General, 257, 270
- Heugh, Lieutenant, 62-63
- Hewitson, 59
- Hiram, 300
- Hitler, Adolf, 96
- Holland, 25
- Hollard Street, 268, 269
- Hollywood, 167
- Honee Klipberg, 31
- Honeyball, George, 42, 44, 218
- House of Commons, 122, 125, 128, 265
- House of Lords, 210
- Illicit Diamond-Buying, 93
- Illicit Gold-Buying, 229-230, 238-244
- India, 159
- Indian Ocean, 300
- Industrial Commission, 117, 119
- Industrial Disputes Act, 170
- Isaacs, Barnett, 91  
*see also* Barnato, Barney
- Isaacs, Henry, 91, 92
- Italy, 96, 159, 162
- Jameson, Leander Starr, 84, 86-88
- Jameson's Raid, 86-90, 102, 104, 110, 114,  
 117, 128, 198
- Jane Dixon*, the, 20
- Jerusalem, 82
- Joel, Solly, 90, 100, 102, 105, 106-116  
 and Government Areas, 196  
 and Robinson, 199-209
- Joel, Woolf, 100, 106-116
- Johannesburg, 70, 74, 75, 82, 84, 94, 106,  
 110, 133, 139, 140, 165, 167, 174,  
 175, 180, 184, 185, 186, 188, 191, 217,  
 '227, 246, 248, 249, 259, 292  
 and London, 267, 268
- Johannesburg—continued  
 and Zimbabwe, 302  
 boom of 1933, 260-262, 285-286  
 description of, 265-270  
 evacuation of, 77  
 foundation of, 54, 55  
 growing unrest under Kruger's policies,  
 117-132  
 growth of, 67-68  
 jails in, 56-58, 60-62  
 Jameson's Raid, 86-90  
 life in, 55-56, 69, 96  
 Market Hall, 97  
 nationalities in, 82, 128  
 Stock Exchange, 95, 96, 97, 100, 260, 269
- Johannesburg Consolidated Investment  
 Company, 175, 199, 200
- Johannesburg Fort, 135
- Jonathan, Chief, 64-66'
- Jones, 125
- Jumpers Company, 146
- Karoo, 17
- Karni-Davies, 90
- Kimberley, 48, 49, 50, 53, 62, 67, 73, 91,  
 93, 98, 192
- King Kong, 167
- "Kismet"  
 the letters of, 107-109, 109-110, 111
- Kleinboy, 39-40, 47
- Kleinfountain Company, 171-172
- Kleinfountain Strike, 169-173
- Klerksdorp, 104
- Klip River, 62
- Kruger, Paul  
*see* Kruger, Stephanus Paulus
- Kruger, Stephanus Paulus, 17, 30, 53, 54,  
 69, 97, 100, 110, 197  
 and Barnato, 100-104  
 character of, 53, 70-71, 75-76, 78-79, 81,  
 83-90, 103, 118, 197-198  
 and J. B. Robinson, 197-199  
 end of life, 133  
 his speech after Jameson's Raid, 89-90  
 president of South African Republic, 39  
 reduces franchise, 126-127  
 the missing Kruger millions, 133-140  
 the tragedy of his position, 130-131, 132-  
 133  
 versus Rhodes, 81-82'
- Krugersdorp, 65, 186
- Krugersdorp Bank, 58, 59-60

# THE GREAT GOLD REEF

- Ku Klux Klan, 176  
 Kurtze  
     *see* Veltheim, Kurt von
- Labia, Count, 212  
 Labia, Countess, 213  
 Land Tenure System, 158  
 Langerman, John, 201-207  
 Langlaagte, 41, 44, 191, 193  
     a visit to, 217-226  
         fire, 293  
         gold discovered, 42-43  
         sold to J. B. Robinson, 49-50  
 League of Nations, 250  
 Lebanon, 300  
 Leydsdorp, 139  
 Liebig condensers, 234  
 Limpopo River, 32  
 Lippert, Edward, 72-73  
 Lithuania, 82  
 Liverpool, 20  
 Livingstone, 32  
 Lloyd George, David, 210  
 London, 92, 97, 114, 115, 123, 198, 201, 261  
     *London Times, The*, 129  
 Lost Gold Reef, 263-264  
 Lourenço Marques, 133, 136  
 Low-Grade Ore Commission, 252  
 Luipaardsvlei, 186  
 Luipaardsvlei Estate, 178  
 Lys, Captain, 35  
 Lys, Godfray, 47  
     prospects with Fred Struben, 35, 36-40, 41-42  
 Lys, Robert, 34
- Ma Ntatisi, 19  
 MacArthur, 77  
 MacArthur-Forrest process, 77-78, 96  
 Machadadorp, 133, 135  
 Mafeking, 94  
 Magaliesberg, 31  
 Makalanga tribe, 302  
 Makapaan, Chief, 30  
 Makapaanspoort, 30  
 Malmaine, 31  
 Mama Letshe Moshesh, Chief, 63, 64, 146-147  
 Mapela, Chief, 30  
 Marais, Piet, 17-32, 38  
     and Volksraad contract, 26-29, 30-32  
 Marais, Piet—continued  
     discovers gold in Yokskei River, 23-24  
     wanderings in Transvaal, 29-32  
 Marcus  
     *see* Edgar and Marcus, Messrs.  
 Marewu, 166  
 Marico, 31  
 Marievale Mine, 195  
 Maritz, 17  
 Market Square, 174  
 Marysville, 20  
 Matabele Tribe, 18, 302  
 Matata, 30  
 Matselikaats, 31  
 Matthias, 99  
 Mauch, Carl, 32, 39  
     discovers gold in Bechuanaland, 33-34  
 McKeone, John Lewis, 58-67  
 McKeone, Martha, 64-66  
 Mediterranean Sea, 300  
 Melbourne, 20  
 Meriposa River, 20  
 Meyer, Jan, 53  
 Milner, Sir Alfred, 123, 130  
 Mine Workers' Union, 179  
 Mix, Tom, 164  
 Moodie's Camp, 36  
 Moselekatse, Chief, 18, 31  
 Mozambique, 165  
 Mussolini, Benito, 96, 212
- Namaqualand, 31  
 Natal, 18, 19, 36, 53, 67, 79, 116, 142, 160  
 Native Recruiting Corporation, 165  
 Natives Land Act, 161-163  
 Nederlandsche Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorwegmaatschappij, 80
- Negro  
     life in mines, 151-155, 163-168  
     tribal life of, 141-143, 150, 155  
 Negro labor problem, 141, 142, 156  
     discipline, 149-152  
     effect of Boer War, 155  
     general strike, 169-190  
     modern recruitment, 165  
     ruses to obtain native labor, 143-149, 156-159, 161-163  
 Nellmapius, 71-72, 155  
 Netherlands Railway Company, 80  
 New Goch Gold Mines, 178  
 New Machavie Mine  
     flood, 295-298

# INDEX

- New Modder Mine, 247  
 attempted burglary, 247-249
- New State Areas, 257
- New York, 261
- Oak Valley, 20
- Old Masters, 198
- Oliphants River, 33
- Oosthuizen, Widow, 41-42, 44-49, 52, 191,  
 193, 217, 226
- Ophir, 300
- Orange Free State, 62, 79, 183, 193, 263
- Orange River, 74
- Othello, 99
- Otto's Hoop, 94, 95
- Owen, 19
- Park Lane, 198, 201
- Paris, 261
- Paul, Oom, 130
- Pegomoa, Chief, 31
- Penguin*, the, 136-137
- Peoples' Parliament  
*see* Volksraad, the
- Perfect Fraud, the, 233-236
- Perth, 114
- Phillips, Lionel, 85, 90
- Phœnicians  
 ancient mining activities of, 300-302
- Pierce, 202
- Pitsani, 87
- Plessis, Gert du, 49-50, 193
- Plessis, Maria du, 50
- Pole, 85
- Potchefstroom, 23, 24, 27, 30, 32, 46, 192
- Potgieter, C., 28
- Potgieter, Hendrik, 17, 18
- Potgieter, Piet, 30
- Press Law, the, 124
- Pretoria, 30, 32, 35, 39, 53, 62, 66, 67, 68,  
 132, 142, 185  
 home of Paul Kruger, 70, 101, 122, 198
- Pretorius, 137-140
- Pthisis  
*see* Silicosis
- Public Meetings Act, 125
- Rand, the  
*see* Witwatersrand
- Rand Club, the, 175
- Rand Daily Mail*, 211-213
- Randfontain Central, 199-209, 293  
 formation of, 178, 206
- Randfontain Estates Gold Mining Company,  
 197, 198, 207, 263, 264
- Rand Refinery, 244-246, 247
- Rand Revolution, 183-190, 252
- Recreation Hall, 128
- Red Flag*, the, 189-190
- Reef, the  
*see* Witwatersrand
- Reform Committee, 86, 88, 90, 102, 103,  
 104
- Reitz, Colonel, 135, 136
- Reitz, Doctor, 121
- Retief, Piet, 17, 18-19
- Rhenoster River, 63
- Rhodes, Cecil, 32, 80, 81, 84, 85, 90, 93,  
 198  
 versus Kruger, 81-82
- Rhodes, Frank, 90
- Rhodesia, 84, 192, 299
- Ridge of the White Waters  
*see* Witwatersrand
- Roberts, Leslie, 295-296
- Roberts, Lord, 133
- Robinson Bank, 199
- Robinson, Constance, 213
- Robinson Deep, 271-292, 303  
 the rock-fall of 1932, 287-292
- Robinson, Florence, 213
- Robinson, Joseph Benjamin, 48, 52, 94,  
 100, 218, 228  
 and Italy, 211-213  
 and knighthood, 209-210  
 and Kruger, 197-199  
 and Solly Joel, 199-209  
 business methods of, 200-207  
 buys Langlaagte, 49-50  
 character of, 197-198, 214-216  
 death of, 210-216  
 early life of, 192-193  
 his Langlaagte mine, 193  
 his testament, 213-214  
 the Secret Profits Case, 191-210
- Robinson, Lady, 213
- Robinson, Leonora, 213
- Robinson, Wilfred, 214
- Roman Dutch Law, 102
- Rose-Innes, Sir James, 205
- Rothschild, 52
- "Rotten Reef," 52, 68, 77, 255
- Rule Britannia*, 85

# THE GREAT GOLD REEF

- Russia, 82
- Russian Soviet
  - influences South African labor, 181-183, 184
- Rustenburg, 27
- Sabzo-Arabbians
  - ancient mining activities of, 299-300
- Saint Domingo, 20
- San Francisco, 20
- Sarah Sands*, the, 20
- Scholtz, 202
- Scot*, the, 105
- Searelle, Luscombe, 69
- Secret Profits Case, 200-210
- Shakespeare, 99
- Sheba, 300
- Sikonyela, 19
- Silicosis, 275-276
- Simmer and Jack Mine, 178
- Simonstown, 218
- Smuts, Jan, 122, 181, 184, 186, 270
- Sofala, 300, 301
- Solomon, Arthur, 243
- Solomon, King, 300, 302
- South Africa, 20, 24, 34, 39, 49, 85, 91
  - and swindling, 227-249
  - controlled by monopolies, 71-76, 78, 117-120
  - dominated by Boers
    - see South Africa, government of
    - see also Aliens Expulsion Act
  - early settlers of, 17
  - first gold rush, 33-34
  - formation of Union, 161, 165, 266
  - foundation of Republic, 20, 185, 197
  - government of, 21-22, 34, 66, 70-76, 80, 101, 185
  - government profit from mines, 256-260
  - in a drought year, 78-80
  - influence of gold standard, 252-256
  - Jameson's Raid, 86-90
  - labor problem, 141-168, 169-190
  - methods of communication, 93-94
  - modern transportation of gold, 245-247
  - native resistance, 18-19, 22-23, 30, 142, 143
  - people desire voice in government, 77, 82-86
  - railroads, 80-82
  - settlement of, 17-22, 33, 52-53, 142
  - transportation in, 74-76, 79-80
- South African Industrial Federation, 178
- South African Law and Order, 183
- South African Mounted Rifles, 188
- South African Party, 181
- Southampton, 91
- Springs, 186, 196
- Star, The*, 108, 109, 110, 111, 118-119, 121-122, 175
- Strange, Harold, 109, 111, 113, 114
- Struben, Fred, 47
  - prospects with Godfrey Lys, 35, 36-40, 41-42
- Struben, Harry, 35, 36-37, 39, 41, 47
- Sub-Nigel Mine, 257, 263, 264, 280-281, 293
  - skip crash, 294
- Suscol Valley, 20
- Swart, Daniel, 137-140
- Swartz, J. P., 135, 136
- Swazi tribe, 142
- Table Bay, 17, 20, 192
- Table Mountain, 17
- Tandam, 297
- Tati, 33
- Temple, Shirley, 192
- Tharshush, 300
- Third International, 181
- Times, The*
  - see *London Times, The*
- Toit, Jan du, 49, 204
- Tossel, Sergeant, 60
- Town Hall, 180
- Trades Unions, 169-190
- Transvaal, the, 23, 35, 39, 51, 52, 53, 62, 87, 116, 122, 142, 147, 183, 263, 299
  - first gold rush, 33-34
  - gold first discovered, 23-24
  - second gold rush, 51-53
  - topography of, 40
- Transvaal Mounted Police, 62, 63
- Transvaal National Union, 84
- Transvaal Volksraad
  - see Volksraad
- Triechard, 17
- Tshaka, Chief, 150
- Tsikiam, 65
- Turpend, Joseph, 59-67
- Tyre, 300
- Uitlanders, 75, 121, 122
  - petition to Victoria, 124-125

## INDEX

- Uitvalfontain, 204
- Umkungunklovu, 18-19
- Union Jack, 85
- Union of South Africa, 165, 266
  - foundation of, 161
- Uys, 17
- Vaal River, 32, 64
- Vaal, the
  - see* Transvaal
- Van Niekerk, 137-140
- Van Ryn Mine
  - labor dispute, 173-174
- Veltheim, Kurt von, 112-116
- Venice, 212
- Victoria Falls, 163
- Victoria Falls Power Station, 183
- Victoria, Queen of England, 68, 90, 91, 123, 128
- Viljoen, Jan, 31
- Village Deep, 128, 178
- Villiers, Japie de, 49-50, 193
- Vincent, Captain of Royal Reserve, 114
- Volksraad, the, 21-22, 35, 53, 66, 80, 82, 130, 198
  - and the discovery of gold, 24-29, 30-32, 39
- Vrededorp, 248, 249
- Walker, George, 40-43, 53, 192
  - discovers gold reef of Witwatersrand, 42-43, 44, 217, 299
- Walker's Reef, 47, 49
- Waterberg Camp, 36
- Waterson, 185
- Waterval, 204, 206, 207
- Waterval Trust Company, 204, 205
- Way, William, 30
- Webb
  - see* Dodd and Webb, Messrs.
- Wemmer, Sam, 53, 68-69
- Wernher, 94
- Westminster, 122, 129
- Whitechapel, 92
- White, Robert, 88
- White South Africa, 181, 182, 183
- Wilgespruit, 37
- Williams, Ralph Charles, 68
- Willoughby, Sir John, 87, 88
- "Willows," the, 35, 36, 37
- Witpoortje Hotel, 60
- Witte Waters Rand
  - see* Witwatersrand
- Witwatersrand, 24, 29, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 49, 52, 53, 67-68, 69, 73, 76, 91, 93, 123, 141, 169, 192
  - early mining methods, 54-55, 68-69
  - effect of World War on mining, 177
  - elusiveness of reef, 194-197, 227
  - establishment of first mines, 53
  - great gold reef discovered, 42, 217, 230, 299
  - labor strikes, 169-190
  - method of mine rescue, 289-292, 293
  - mine disasters, 287-298
  - permanency of, 82, 250-256, 262-265, 284
  - quality of mines, 178, 303
- Witwatersrand Native Labor Association, 165
- Wood, William, 19
- Woolls-Sampson, 90
- World War, 169, 176, 177, 180
- Yellow Peril, the, 160-161
- Yokskei River, 23, 24, 29, 30
- Young, Mrs., 214
- Yuba River, 20
- Zebedela, 30
- Zimbabwe, 301, 302
- Zoutpansberg, 18, 27, 30
- Zulu tribe, 19, 142













